Santa Vijaya

The Life of Samartha Ramadas

Composed by Sri Mahipati

On the sacred banks of the Godavari lay the holy village of Jamba, renowned for its sanctity. There lived a devout servant of God named Suryajipanta and his virtuous wife Ranubai. Though a householder, Suryajipanta's mind was fixed on the highest spiritual truth. He lived by strict truthfulness, showed compassion to all beings, and welcomed every guest as an embodiment of Vishnu, serving them with reverence and generosity.

Both husband and wife delighted in the Puranas and in devotional songs to Hari. Suryajipanta worshipped the Sun with complete dedication. Each morning he offered flowers, sandalwood, and sacred mantras, constantly meditating upon the Sun with love. He performed daily salutations and repeated the sacred mantra with unwavering concentration for twelve years.

At the end of this long devotion, the Sun revealed Himself in blazing splendor upon His chariot. Overcome with joy, Suryajipanta bowed in reverence and praised the Lord as the ruler of all worlds, the visible deity who sustains sages, gods, and all creation, even in the dark age of Kali.

Pleased, the Sun granted him a boon. Suryajipanta asked only for virtuous sons, free from cruelty, sin, and suffering. Ranubai humbly prayed that righteousness was better than fruitless beauty or mere birth. The Lord smiled and blessed them with two sons: one, a portion of Himself, who would balance worldly duty with spiritual wisdom, and another, a portion of Maruti, detached from the world and devoted to bhakti and knowledge for the good of all.

After granting the blessing, the Sun disappeared. The couple's devotion remained pure and selfless. They faithfully observed Ratha Saptami, fed Brahmans, and continued their charitable worship each Sunday. In time, Ranubai conceived, and their hearts were filled with gratitude and joy.

When the nine months were complete, a beautiful son was born, adorned with every noble quality and lacking nothing. Overwhelmed with joy, the parents gazed upon their child with love and gratitude. They distributed gifts according to their means and invited Brahmans to recite prayers of peace, moved by devotion and happiness.

On the thirteenth day, the child was placed in a cradle. Many married women gathered for the celebration, singing traditional cradle songs. They were honored with saffron, fragrant pastes, and generous gifts. Out of deep affection, the parents named the child Gangadhara.

As time passed, Gangadhara grew steadily. In his seventh year, he was invested with the sacred thread. Soon afterward, Ranubai conceived once more. The father ensured that Gangadhara received a fine education and later sought a worthy family into which his son could be married. In due course, the marriage was celebrated with joy, and relatives gathered from all sides, for the blessings of the Sun filled the household with prosperity.

When Ranubai beheld the face of her daughter-in-law, her heart overflowed with happiness. Blessing the young couple, the family returned home, united in joy and contentment.

Ranubai passed her pregnancy without any discomfort, and when her time was complete, she gave birth to a beautiful son without the least suffering. When the news reached outside, Suryajipanta was filled with joy. Learned Brahmans gathered, sweet auspicious music filled the air, and the celebration continued for twelve days.

The naming ceremony was performed with great devotion. Suryajipanta fed a large number of Brahmans and also ensured that the Shudras of the town were well fed. The child was placed in a cradle, and gifts were given to married women. With loving hearts, the parents named the child Narayana.

After the ceremonies, Ranubai quietly drew her husband aside and spoke with concern. She told him that a small tail-like mark could be seen at the end of the child's spine, which constantly moved, and she was astonished by it. Suryajipanta then remembered the words of the Sun, who had foretold that Maruti would enter her womb. He reassured her that the child was a portion of Maruti himself and asked that this matter not be spoken of to anyone.

The child was always cheerful and never cried. Day by day he grew with remarkable radiance and strength. Within months he learned to sit, crawl, and respond when called, bringing great joy to his parents. By the age of two, he could walk and talk, never remaining still even for a moment, constantly running in and out of the house.

He was quick, agile, and playful, often leaping about and mimicking the expressions of a monkey. When his mother warned him not to go outside, saying that hobgoblins lived there, the boy boldly asked what a hobgoblin looked like and declared that he would kill one if shown. At his fearless words, both parents laughed with delight, and his mother would lift him close and nurse him with affection.

Though many toys were made for him, the child refused to stay indoors and longed to rush outside. When his mother cautioned him that thieves might steal the ornaments he wore, he simply asked her to remove them, saying he could not endure staying inside. Hearing his lisping words, his parents laughed joyfully, yet fearing the evil eye, they lovingly waved neem leaves and salt around him for protection.

When the boy reached the age of five, his parents chose an auspicious time and placed him in school. Within a single year, he mastered all that was taught. In his seventh year, his father decided to perform the sacred thread ceremony. The planetary signs were favorable, astrologers fixed the auspicious day, and invitations were sent to relatives and friends.

On the appointed day, sweet music filled the air, the presiding deity was duly installed, and Brahmans were honored with rich feasts. The boy's head was shaved, leaving a tuft of hair, and the mother and son partook of the ceremonial meal together. At the sacred moment, the Brahmans invoked the family deity and invested the boy with the sacred thread. Drums sounded, gifts were distributed, and the ceremonies were completed with joy and generosity. For several days, Brahmans were feasted and richly rewarded, after which relatives and friends returned to their homes.

Narayana then began daily study with the family guru and committed the Vedas to memory with ease, for his intellect was extraordinary.

The elder son, Gangadhara, managed the household affairs and faithfully fulfilled his worldly duties. He delighted in daily worship, the study of the Vedas, devotional songs to Hari, and obedience to his parents. Though surrounded by worldly responsibilities, his mind remained untouched by them, absorbed entirely in the divine form of Rama, just as the sky is reflected in water without being bound by it.

One day, while seated among officials near the sacred peepal tree, Gangadhara remained lost in contemplation even after others had departed. At that moment, Rama, the destroyer of Ravana, revealed Himself in radiant splendor, surpassing even the brilliance of the Sun. Clad in yellow garments, adorned with divine jewels, bearing the Kaustubha gem upon His chest, and accompanied by Sita, Lakshmana, and Hanuman, the Lord stood before him.

Overcome with bliss, Gangadhara embraced the feet of Rama and lost all awareness of his body. God and devotee embraced one another, and Gangadhara merged into Rama in essence. Hanuman was then told that Gangadhara should henceforth be known as Ramdas. Having bestowed His grace and removed the veil of worldly illusion, Rama vanished from sight.

Regaining outward awareness, Ramdas remembered his parents and hastened home. When questioned by his father about his delay, he quietly revealed the divine vision and the new name bestowed upon him. Suryajipanta beheld a remarkable transformation in his son and rejoiced deeply.

Thereafter, Ramdas composed many spiritual works, including the well-known Bhaktirahasya, along with numerous verses filled with devotion born of direct experience. He celebrated Rama Navami with great joy, drawing Vaishnavas, saints, and devotees who gathered for kirtans, feasts, and sacred dramas recounting the deeds of Rama.

Though living amidst worldly life, his soul remained fixed on the supreme spiritual truth. Freed from fear, ego, anger, and desire, his love became centered entirely on worship. By the grace of Rama, worldly riches were transformed into supreme spiritual wealth, proving that in any home where Rama reigns, nothing is ever lacking.

From childhood he was fearless by nature. He played freely with the boys of the town, utterly beyond restraint. If there was a tall or difficult tree, he would climb straight to its top. When the boys cried out in fear that he had fallen, he would descend unharmed and calmly sit upon a wall.

He leapt onto flat rooftops and jumped across narrow alleys without the slightest hesitation. Alarmed, the boys sometimes warned his mother that he leapt everywhere and that if he fell, they would not be to blame. His mother, watching him, wondered aloud how such fearlessness and detachment from worldly thought could exist in one so young.

One day Narayana disappeared within the house. His mother searched everywhere and even sent people through the town, but he could not be found. Suryajipanta heard of this while at his office. At last, when Ranubai entered a dark storage room where earthen jars were kept, her foot touched something soft. Startled, she cried out, wondering whether it was an animal. Narayana replied calmly that it was he.

With relief and affection, she asked why he had hidden himself and caused such worry. Narayana answered that he had not been idle but had been thinking about how worldly affairs are managed, though he could not clearly understand them. Hearing this, the mother laughed, embraced him, and brought him out. Word was sent to Suryajipanta, who rushed home in joy. When told of the incident, he gently said that the child should not be scolded, for wisdom would come naturally with age.

Curious, Narayana asked his mother what it meant to be wise. She replied that one must learn to bring grain and wealth into the house, for only then could one manage a family life properly. He agreed at once, and the very next day he acted upon her words.

Narayana went to a threshing floor where a farmer had stored bags of grain. Lifting one heavy bag, he ran like the wind, faster than the farmer could follow. He dropped the bag on the verandah and told his mother that he had brought grain for the house. When the farmer arrived, astonished at the boy's strength, he wondered whether the child was human at all.

Narayana told him to take his bag back. As the farmer lifted it, another bag appeared beneath it. One by one, more bags emerged, until over fifty were revealed, to the amazement of all. Narayana urged the farmer to leave quickly, warning that his father would soon return. The frightened farmer fled, and the endless bags of grain were piled up by helpers until their hands grew weary.

When Suryajipanta returned and heard everything, he said with quiet wonder that his wife had given birth to an avatara, and prayed that they might be blessed with the fortune of keeping such a divine being in their home.

Ranubai then said that Narayana's marriage should be arranged without delay. She felt that if he were bound by household life, he would naturally remain at home. Suryajipanta agreed and sought a family of good standing. The match was fixed, the priest was consulted, and preparations began. Relatives were invited, garments and ornaments prepared, and musicians engaged.

The marriage procession set out in grand splendor. Drums, horns, and instruments filled the air, while horses and chariots formed a vast moving assembly. The bridegroom rode proudly on horseback, and his mother sat in a chariot. The roads were so crowded that there was scarcely space to walk. When the procession reached the bride's town, the bride's family came forth to welcome them with music and honor. The bridegroom was worshipped, garments of gold and silver thread were offered, and the two parties joyfully escorted one another to their lodgings.

At dawn, auspicious rites began in both pavilions. Saffron paste was applied, the marriage deity was installed, and Brahmans were richly fed. As evening approached, gifts were carried in procession to the bridegroom, who was then escorted to the bride's home with banners, music, and fireworks. Trumpets, fifes, and drums resounded, and all hearts were filled with celebration.

The bridegroom was adorned in wedding garments and ornaments and seated on a horse. After worship of Ganesha, the procession moved to the bride's house. The bride was brought forth, worshipped, and adorned with the marriage string and ornaments. Bride and bridegroom were seated facing one another, with a curtain drawn between them, while the priests recited the auspicious verses and invoked the holy rivers to bless the couple.

As the priests repeatedly uttered the word "Savadhana," Narayana turned to the bride's brothers and asked whom the warning was meant for. They jokingly replied that from that moment onward the bonds of household life would bind his feet, and that he should beware. These words struck Narayana's heart like a violent wind upon a hidden fire. In an instant, his detachment flared up, burning away all desire for domestic life.

Overwhelmed, he thought that his parents were seeking to entangle him in an ocean of sorrow. With scarcely any time left before the final rites, he remembered Rama and prayed for deliverance. Trusting that none but Rama could save him, he slipped silently from behind the curtain and fled with the speed of the wind.

When the priests and guests realized that the bridegroom had vanished, confusion broke out. Cries arose to catch him, and all were stunned. Narayana's mother, hearing the news, burst into loud lamentation, calling out for her child in anguish. The priest stopped the ceremony, declaring that an inauspicious event had interrupted the auspicious rites.

Men rushed through streets, fields, and forests searching for the bridegroom. Horsemen rode far and wide, but Narayana could not be found. The parents wept in despair. As night deepened and the moon had set, the search was halted, and they resolved to resume at sunrise, believing the boy had fled into some forest.

All through the night, Suryajipanta and Ranubai remained in sorrow and anxiety. People spoke among themselves in different ways. Some said it was fortunate for the bride, who would otherwise have been bound to a man destined for renunciation. Others blamed fate, while some marveled that a boy born into wealth had cast aside all comfort and fled into the wilderness. Thus the night passed in grief and speculation, while the parents longed for dawn.

As Narayana cast aside all thoughts of affection and fled into the jungle. Horsemen and officials searched everywhere, in the town and for miles beyond, but the boy, lost in divine absorption and unconscious of his body, could not be found. His parents lay awake all night in anguish, though dawn brought a faint hope. Relatives tried to console Suryajipanta, assuring him that search parties were still at work. The mother, weeping bitterly, declared that she no longer desired his marriage and begged only to see her son once more.

When the search proved fruitless, the wedding procession returned home in sorrow. Elders consoled the parents, saying that Narayana was protected by God and destined for a higher purpose. They reminded them of the extraordinary signs of his childhood, his fearless strength, miraculous deeds, and divine nature, declaring him an incarnation of Maruti, born for the welfare of the world. Comforted by these words, the parents placed their faith in Rama and remained at home, trusting in divine protection.

Meanwhile, Narayana wandered alone through a dense and fearful forest. He possessed nothing but a cloth and his sacred thread, yet he felt no hunger or thirst. His joy was like that of a creature escaping a snare and entering

freedom. Though surrounded by wild beasts, he felt no fear, for Rama's grace protected him. His heart burned only with the desire for divine realization, and he pondered deeply on how to attain a direct vision of God.

Turning his mind with devotion toward Maruti, he began praising him with fervent prayers. Yet when no vision appeared, Narayana resolved to renounce even attachment to his body. Fashioning a rope from forest vines, he attempted to offer his life itself, pleading with Maruti for divine revelation. Moved by this intense devotion, Maruti appeared in a blazing form of light, radiant like the sun, and freed Narayana at once, embracing him with great affection.

Overwhelmed with joy, Narayana composed his first devotional verses, declaring that Maruti alone was his refuge and deliverer from the ocean of worldly existence. Maruti, pleased, comforted him and revealed that Narayana was dear to him as life itself. He assured him that Rama would grant him divine grace and led him toward Panchavati, where he would behold Rama directly.

Maruti and Ramdas swiftly arrived at Panchavati. As the sun had set, they sat beside the Ramakunda and performed their evening worship inwardly, unseen by others. When they proceeded to seek God in solitude, they discovered that a great pilgrimage was underway. Musical instruments resounded, and in the assembly hall a kirtana was being sung, with devotees loudly chanting the name of Rama.

Seeing this, Narayana's heart overflowed with joy. He remarked to Maruti that it appeared a gathering of pilgrims had assembled. Maruti replied that the festival of Ramanavami was being celebrated, for Rama Himself dwelt there, and devotees had come to behold Him.

When half the night had passed and the pilgrims had retired, Maruti said to Narayana that he would now grant him a private meeting with Rama. Holding him close, the Son of the Wind entered the inner sanctuary and looked upon the divine form. Rama stood radiant with dazzling light, adorned with shining jewels, holding His bow and arrows, wearing crocodile-shaped earrings, a brilliant crown that outshone the sun, heroic ornaments, and the divine yellow garment. Beholding Him thus, Maruti bowed in deep reverence.

Rama then asked Maruti why he had come and who the one was that he had brought, saying that Maruti had traveled far from Rameshvara. Maruti replied that, according to Rama's command, he had taken birth as an incarnation and had now come to place this devotee at His feet.

Though Narayana heard this sacred exchange, Rama was not yet visible to him. For without the grace of a true guru, the vision of Rama cannot be attained. Knowing this, Maruti pleaded with Rama to grant Narayana His favor. He reminded Him that in the Treta age He had received such grace and asked that the same mercy be extended to Narayana.

Rama agreed and, placing His assuring hand upon Narayana's head, bestowed upon him divine grace and the sacred Name. Through this mercy, Narayana received the fruits of detachment, devotion, and loving worship. Then Rama granted him a direct vision of Himself.

Shri Rama then declared to Maruti that Narayana would henceforth be known as Ramdas, whose mission was to uplift and save the world. Rama foretold that Ramdas's followers would one day spread everywhere, and that both men and women would worship Maruti and study the life of Ramdas. Removing His ochre garment, Rama placed it upon Ramdas, formally initiating him and entrusting him with the work of guiding disciples. He also gave Ramdas the forest garments He Himself had once worn, fulfilling His father's ancient promise and granting them as a sign of divine favor.

After offering reverent obeisance, Maruti and Ramdas departed. They bathed in the sacred Godavari and completed their rites with hearts fixed solely on Rama. From there they traveled eastward to Takali. Along the way, Maruti noticed Ramdas overcome with emotion, tears streaming from his eyes. Ramdas confessed that he could not endure life without Rama and pleaded to return to Panchavati.

Understanding his state, Maruti accompanied him back. They prostrated before Rama once more, and Ramdas expressed his anguish at separation, longing always to behold Rama's beautiful, tangible form. Moved by this plea, Rama assured him that whenever Ramdas contemplated Him with love, He would appear in saguna form, dispel worldly illusion, and guide him on the easy path of devotion. Rama entrusted Ramdas fully to Maruti's care and promised to dwell forever near his heart.

With reverence, Maruti and Ramdas departed again for Takali. Ramdas carried Rama's form firmly within his heart and Rama's story within his ears. Maruti recited the Ramayana in poetic drama, and Ramdas listened with deep love, later composing and singing the story in Marathi during kirtanas. His inspired narration pierced the hearts of listeners, filling them with a joy even the gods could scarcely comprehend.

Though Ramdas was visible to all, Maruti remained unseen by others. United in love and devotion, the two continually conversed in private, their bond radiant with divine grace.

After many days, Maruti told Ramdas that he must return to Rameshvara. Hearing this, Ramdas was overwhelmed with love and sorrow, and begged to accompany him, reminding Maruti that Rama Himself had entrusted him to his care. Maruti gently reassured Ramdas that there was no separation between them, for he was dearer to him than life itself. He explained that Rama had commanded him to protect Bibhishana from demons and disturbances, and therefore his return was necessary.

Maruti instructed Ramdas not to grieve, assuring him that whenever he remembered him during worship, he would appear at once. He directed Ramdas to journey southward, live detached from worldly ways, avoid common paths, and inspire people toward devotion by whatever means possible. He also instructed him to grant anugraha to sincere seekers. Ramdas bowed in loving obedience, and Maruti departed, reaching Rameshvara in a moment.

Ramdas remained at Takali for some time, conducting daily kirtanas that drew scholars, Brahmans, and devout men and women from Nasik and surrounding regions. He lived by begging, fed Brahmans and the poor, and through his selflessness earned universal respect. A devoted householder named Uddhava Gosavi approached him as a seeker, and Ramdas, recognizing his spiritual fitness, granted him anugraha. Uddhava renounced worldly desires and served his guru with unwavering devotion.

On one occasion, while Ramdas was crafting an deity of Maruti with his own hands, Maruti appeared in visible form and commanded that the image be installed. Learned Brahmans assembled, the deity was bathed with sacred nectars, and through mantra and ritual Maruti entered the image, which shone with divine radiance. The deity was adorned, worshipped with incense, lamps, food offerings, and garlands, and praised in loving songs.

More than a thousand Brahmans were fed, gifts were distributed, and throughout the night Ramdas narrated the life of Maruti as told in the Ramayana. After the rites, Ramdas instructed Uddhava to worship Maruti daily, beg for alms, feed the hungry, preach devotion, and remain free from material desire. Uddhava bowed at his feet, accepting the command as his sacred duty.

That very night, Ramdas performed a kirtana in praise of Hari, joyfully repeating the divine names. After midnight, he quietly rose and departed. When Uddhava searched for him at dawn, Ramdas was nowhere to be found. People gathered and asked after Samartha, and Uddhava told them that he had left during the night. Some searched for him at Panchavati, but he was not there. The truly devout mourned his absence, worshipped Maruti, and waited in hope for his return.

Obeying Maruti's command, Ramdas turned southward and began a life of wandering in dense forests. He lived on wild fruits found at midday and even ate bitter leaves, having conquered the demands of the tongue. He behaved like one possessed, indifferent to honor or insult, and remained fearless in the forests at night. Tigers, wolves, and bears gathered around him, abandoning their natural hostility as they listened to his loud chanting of God's name.

Clad only in a waist cloth and sacred thread, Ramdas was unaffected by heat or cold, so complete was his detachment from bodily comfort. He avoided human paths, resolved that even death was acceptable if only he might gain God's grace. Yet he rejoiced in visiting sacred places, resting briefly wherever divine presence was felt, and departing silently before dawn.

Before long, Ramdas reached the bandit-infested region of Khirad. Even there he remained fearless, wandering barefoot, sleeping under the open sky, and sustaining himself on wild fruits. His life was one of utter simplicity, free from all possessions.

He conceived the desire to reach the Krishna River and continued his journey in unbroken joy. Whether awake or asleep, his mind dwelt only on Rama. Rama filled his dreams, his thoughts, and his speech. To Ramdas, Rama was mother, father, brother, friend, and sole refuge. He declared that Rama alone had rescued him from the endless ocean of worldly existence.

Thus absorbed in singing Rama's deeds, Ramdas arrived at Jamdih, where he found an ancient temple of Maruti. He worshipped there with deep devotion, and the Son of the Wind was pleased, assuring him that the fruits of his devotion would never fail.

Ramdas then composed a verse proclaiming that Hanuman, appointed by Rama to protect devotees, always appeared whenever Ramdas needed him and rushed to his aid against all harm.

Continuing his journey in obedience to Maruti, Ramdas lived on fruits and leaves, radiant in body and tireless in spirit. He wandered day and night without fatigue, accompanied by wild animals who lived peacefully in his presence. Indifferent to supernatural powers, heavenly pleasures, and even liberation itself, he offered all spiritual attainments at the feet of his sadguru.

Thus this brahmachari, an incarnation in human form, worshipped Rama with burning love. To him, all beings were equal. He delighted only in the company of saints and in the eternal story of Rama.

Thus wandering onward, Ramdas arrived at Mahuli, the sacred confluence of the Krishna and Venya rivers. In that holy place he bathed, and in deep contemplation worshipped Maruti. Then the Son of the Wind appeared before Ramdas in visible form, filling his heart with boundless joy. Ramdas said, "I have no protector but You, O Mercy made visible."

Maruti replied, "Now repeat the mantra of thirteen syllables with complete concentration of mind. When you have repeated it thirty-five million times, Rama Himself will appear before you. According to His will, compose books in Marathi. Let them conform to the Bhagavata Purana, gathering within them the essence of the Vedas, so that by listening to them devotion may awaken in the hearts of people."

Having thus instructed him, Maruti vanished from sight. Ramdas continued to wander in the forests surrounding Mahuli. At times he would appear near a village with a tiger walking beside him. Seeing this, the people fled in terror. Children would throw stones at him, shouting, "The madman has come," and then scatter in fear.

Having abandoned all association with human society, this Vaishnava devotee lived in a strange manner in the forest. Yet to Ramdas, this life was perfect peace. He said to himself, "This is a most suitable place for spiritual practice. I shall remain here." Thus resolved, he constantly worshipped Rama.

The Husband of Sita dwelt lovingly in his thoughts, his mind, and his heart. In dreams, in dreamless sleep, and in waking moments, there was nothing but Rama. To ordinary people he appeared insane, yet within him was infinite wisdom. He did not reveal it, yet it could not remain hidden.

Ramdas withdrew alone into the deep forest and began his austerities. Fixing the form of Rama firmly in his heart, he repeated the mantra day and night. He chanted the thirteen-syllabled mantra, the essence of all mantras, with the purity of heart shown by the great yogi Shuka. Renouncing even the highest form of liberation, abandoning all concern for the body, he worshipped Rama with exclusive love.

Hunger and thirst vanished from his awareness. Sleep and inactivity fled from him. Rama filled his entire being, and bodily consciousness disappeared. His devotion made his body radiant. Even Indra, the king of the gods, grew fearful, lest Ramdas might surpass him in spiritual power.

Indra asked his guru, "The age of Kali is harsh and destructive. Who is this mortal performing such severe austerities?" The son of Angira replied, "Hanuman has descended as an avatara to save the world. He is worshipping Rama with supreme devotion."

Hearing this, Indra became alarmed and said, "If he worships Vishnu with such intensity, he may ask for my position. I must place an obstacle in his path."

Alarmed, Indra consulted the gods and said that in the mortal world had arisen a hero equal to Maruti himself. In the entire age of Kali there was no yogi comparable to him. They feared that Vishnu, the resting serpent Shesha, would remove their powers and bestow them upon Ramdas.

The gods replied that the only way to obstruct his austerities was to send Mohini. They recalled that in earlier ages Vishnu was pleased through meditation, sacrifices, and ritual worship, but in Kali Yuga He is pleased through the constant chanting of His holy names. Since Ramdas worshipped Rama day and night without desire, they concluded that he would surely surpass them unless a hindrance was placed before him.

They reminded Indra that Mohini, the primal illusion, had previously deluded even great sages and destroyed the fruits of severe austerities. Indra agreed and commanded Mohini to descend to the mortal world and attempt to captivate Ramdas heart. Delighted, Mohini adorned herself, took Cupid in visible form, and advanced toward the forest, while Spring went ahead, filling it with beauty. The gods watched from their shining chariots.

At that time, Ramdas was immersed in worship deep within the forest. His heart was absorbed entirely in Rama, and he had no awareness of the body. Seeing him, Cupid was struck with fear. Remembering how Shiva had once burned him to ashes with his third eye, he trembled, knowing that Maruti, the chaste brahmachari and avatara of Shiva, was protecting Ramdas. Fearing destruction, Cupid remained still.

Lust cannot approach one whose heart and tongue are filled with Rama, for Rama dwells in all hearts and bestows His love upon His servants. When Ramdas saw the forest adorned by Spring, he immediately understood its hidden intent. Recognizing Indras attempt to obstruct his devotion, he steadied his mind in peace and uttered only words of blessing.

Witnessing this, the sages and gods praised Ramdas and showered flowers upon him. The son of Angira declared to Indra that no obstruction can stand before a devotee of Vishnu. Ramdas, a Vaishnava and full avatara of Maruti, remained unmoved, just as Narayana had once remained unmoved by Indras interference at Badrikashrama.

Ashamed of her failure, Mohini returned to heaven, and the gods withdrew to their abodes, their pride humbled by the unwavering devotion of Ramdas.

Following these events, Samartha, known as Ramdas, continued his contemplation of Maruti. In a moment, as he brought Maruti to his mind, the great son of the wind appeared. Ramdas embraced Maruti's feet tightly, and in that embrace the sense of duality vanished. In their unity, one seemed the body and the other the soul, Ramdas and Maruti. Together as avatara, they had descended to earth to protect and uplift it.

Ramdas told Maruti of Mohini's attempt to hinder him. Maruti blessed him, saying, "Blessed are you, may Rama continue to protect and guide you." After offering worship to Maruti, the two partook of wild fruits, fully absorbed in the devotion and love of Rama. Once their devotion was fulfilled, Maruti vanished from sight, leaving Ramdas to continue his austerities.

Ramdas wandered along the banks of the Krishna River, subsisting on bulbs and roots, rejecting cooked food. Every sense was held in perfect control, and he denied himself sleep and inactivity, dwelling continually on thoughts of Rama. Twelve long years passed in this steadfast meditation, yet he had not directly seen Rama in His transcendental form. While he had glimpses of Him through Maruti three times a day, he longed for the personal, visible form of the Lord.

He had recited the sacred thirteen-syllable mantra thirty-five million times. Maruti then advised him, "Fill your heart with love, and plead with Rama with all devotion. This alone will fulfill your heart's desire. Other means are secondary. Among all methods—rituals, sacrifices, austerities, pilgrimages—the supreme path is sincere, loving pleading with God. Call on Him in your distress, and He will respond as He did to His devotees in past ages."

Taking these words to heart, Ramdas composed verses of pleading, called ashtakas, pouring out the love of his soul. As he recited them in the forest, the Lord of Ayodhya manifested in His transcendental form. His crown sparkled like millions of rising suns, earrings in the form of crocodiles gleamed at His ears, and the beautiful Kaustubha jewel adorned His neck. His bow and arrows gleamed, His arms shone with grace, and the yellow robe around His waist radiated divine light. Beside Him stood the blessed Sita. Overcome with devotion, Ramdas fell at their lotus feet, and their hearts united in a profound embrace.

Though no real separation had ever existed between the Lord and His devotee, many days had passed since their last meeting. In that reunion, the intensity of devotion and love was beyond measure. Rama placed His lotus hand upon Ramdas' head, filling him with divine knowledge and peace. Ramdas, bowing in reverence, felt his heart overflowing with love. Rama instructed him to live near a town, sustain himself by begging, and, whenever a pious soul approached, to bestow upon them the gift of his anugraha. With these words, the Lord-of-the-World vanished from sight, leaving Ramdas empowered to serve the world in devotion.

Following this event, Ramdas continued his worship in the forests along the banks of the Krishna river. The wild animals of the forest and the birds of the trees were always in his company. The sky was his pavilion, and the earth his vast seat. Here, in the midst of nature, he dwelt in the love of Rama, and here was the delight of his heart.

Every morning, he would rise early and make his way into the nearby town to beg, calling aloud, "Victory to Rama!" As he hurried through the streets, he moved with such intensity and absorption that he appeared as one possessed. From ten or so houses, pious people would offer him a small gift of food, and Ramdas, the giver of salvation, would quietly slip away. Some villagers would exclaim, "The crazy man has come!" while others would remark, "He is indifferent to worldly things. Ask his name or town, and he will not reply."

After these encounters with people, he would return to the forest, perform his bath, and prepare his simple meal. Where water was nearby, he would light a fire, knead flour on a rock, and bake cakes on leaves over the coals. Offering his humble food in meditation, he would see the Lord of Sita, Rama, manifest before him.

The extraordinary sweetness of Rama's transcendental form astonished even the gods. He, who dwells on the Ocean of Milk, and for whom Lakshmi is the devoted servant, sat eating cakes cooked on leaves. Supreme Vishnu, the dark-complexioned Lord of the universe, consumed such simple fare without distaste, moved by love and compassion for the lowly devotee. Though Indra offered him the nectar of heaven, Rama, out of love for Ramdas, chose the humble cakes. The gods, watching from their Pushpaka chariots of light, could only marvel but not partake in this divine favor.

Satisfied, Rama enjoyed the simple meal, and for the cleansing of His mouth, Ramdas offered him tulsi leaves, which delighted the Lord. Having comforted his devotee, Rama vanished from sight, or rather, settled in the heart of Ramdas, His happy abode.

Inspired by these divine moments, Samartha Ramdas began composing poetry. Taking pen and ink, he wrote on palasa leaves, reading his verses aloud. The birds and wild animals, appearing as Rama in form, listened with joy. In the evenings, he would cast the leaves into the Krishna River, letting them float away with the current.

One day, while Ramdas followed his usual routine in the forest, King Shivaji arrived on a hunting expedition. Though he had searched all day, he had not found any game, and the intense heat had left him exhausted. His attendants had scattered, leaving the king alone. Fearful of the king, all the forest creatures had gathered around Ramdas, having put aside all enmity, wandering fearlessly in his presence.

As Shivaji approached, he saw a great assembly of animals—tigers, wolves, bears, leopards, monkeys, dogs, rabbits, and birds—all together, at peace, and playful. Among them, he saw the great man, Ramdas, and was struck with awe. "Blessed is this day," he exclaimed in astonishment. In his heart, the king thought, "Surely this is no ordinary man; he must be divine in part."

Yet approaching Ramdas directly seemed too dangerous because of the fearless wild beasts. From a distance, he prostrated himself on the ground in reverence. Turning to his minister, he said, "Let my soldiers cross to the other side of the river. I wish to remain here alone." Though his desire to meet Ramdas was strong, he feared the forest and its animals, and so he waited, anxious and restless.

As the sun set, the king returned to his camp with his soldiers, yet his mind remained troubled. "When shall I meet my dear guide?" he wondered. "If my fortune rises, only then shall I succeed in seeing him." Unable to enjoy any form of entertainment or find rest, the king passed a sleepless night, consumed by thoughts of Ramdas.

Early one morning, King Shivaji performed his bath and, as was his custom, repeated the sacred names of God. After a simple breakfast, he set out, saying to his minister, "I have no mind to hunt today. I wish only to meet that great man. There is no need for many attendants."

So he rode alone, swiftly and silently, without music or fanfare, until he reached the region of the Krishna River. Suddenly, from a distance, he saw Samartha Ramdas, eyes closed in deep meditation, absorbed in the worship of Rama. Overcome with reverence, the king prostrated himself on the ground.

Though he longed to approach Ramdas, he feared the tigers and other wild beasts that roamed nearby. "If I disturb them, the holy man may curse me," he thought. Just as a mother protects her child, Ramdas cared for these creatures, and the king respected that divine care. He sat still for an entire watch of the day, thinking, "When it pleases God, my heart's longing will be fulfilled."

Unable to meet Ramdas directly, he returned to the riverbank, where a strange and seemingly miraculous thing occurred. The king's secretary noticed palasa leaves floating along the river, each inscribed with writing. Curious, he picked up the leaves and began to read aloud. The king quietly listened, captivated. The verses were filled with blessings, poetry, prose, and devotional songs, abhangas and shlokas, all conveying deep spiritual truths. As he listened, tears of love and devotion welled in his eyes.

The king discerned that the author of these verses was a devout Vaishnava, a worshipper of God whose knowledge was grounded in the Vedas and Puranas. Though he could not find the author's birthplace or town, he understood that the poet's heart was fully devoted to God. With a prayerful spirit, he resolved to approach this holy man, hoping that if his past deeds allowed, he might receive spiritual guidance and cross the ocean of worldly existence.

From that day, the king made it his habit to go daily to the river, collect the palasa leaves, and take them to his copyist to be transcribed. He read the verses over and over, never growing weary, his desire to meet Ramdas growing stronger while he left aside thoughts of kingship and rule.

Soon, the people of the kingdom began to gossip. “The king’s mind is affected,” they said. “The ascetic performing austerities has made him crazy. He abandons horseback riding and hunting. He gives no thought to the kingdom, rising early every day to meet that crazy man.”

Some whispered, “He must know mantras that bewitch. He has tamed wild beasts and even our king’s mind. What fate has befallen him?” Concern spread through the ministers and the learned Brahmans. They approached the king with caution: “O King, the burden of your kingdom is upon you. You must attend to your duties as a ruler. You cannot continually go after this great man.”

The pandits cautioned him further: “You are fond of his poetry, but the same knowledge can be found in Sanskrit texts. To set aside Vyasa’s words and spend your time on verses in Marathi seems unworthy. Your duty is to guide and reward good men, not to follow them blindly. Beware lest this attachment lead you astray.”

Though their words caused some inner confusion, the king remained respectful and silent. He listened, yet his heart remained true, for he was a devoted bhakta of his guru.

One morning, he mounted his horse and rode alone to the forest, longing to see his spiritual guide. Upon reaching the Krishna River, he instructed his attendants to search the stream for more inscribed leaves, but to stay at a distance. “I go alone to meet my Swami. No one is to accompany me,” he commanded, and they obeyed.

When King Shivaji approached Samartha Ramdas, he looked closely at the great ascetic’s form. Suddenly, an extraordinary event unfolded. From the sky, Maruti revealed Himself, and Ramdas was immersed in worship. The divine light was so dazzling that the king had to close his eyes.

It was the third watch of the day, and when he finally opened his eyes, he saw no one but Ramdas. Overcome with joy, he joined his hands in reverence, tears streaming as he gazed upon his guru.

Samartha observed him with insight and thought, “He has come sincerely, having returned in search of truth many times.” Recognizing the purity of the king’s heart, he beckoned Shivaji to approach. The king, his heart overflowing with devotion, prostrated repeatedly, moving closer with tears and repentance. “I have fallen into the difficulties of this worldly existence. Forgive me,” he cried.

Seeing his deep contrition, Ramdas felt compassion and gently placed his hand upon the king. “Rise, O King,” he said.

Hearing these words, Shivaji’s heart filled with joy. He folded his hands and spoke: “O Samartha, I am drowning in the ocean of worldly suffering. Save me, Protector of the Helpless, dear Guru. I have no deeds of merit to my name; instead, I carry countless sins. Grant me your grace, and let me rest in the shadow of your feet.”

Samartha replied with wisdom: “On your shoulders rests the governance of this kingdom. The responsibilities of rulership and the pursuit of supreme spiritual wealth are often in conflict. To truly be my disciple, you must first adjust your habits. Your kingdom is prosperous, and you are destined to enjoy it. Yet attachment to worldly power will hinder your spiritual growth.”

Hearing this, the king bowed deeply and said, “All this kingdom belongs to you, my Sadguru. I am ready to obey in every way.”

Samartha then instructed him: “O King, association with the frivolous and worldly-minded invites mockery. To openly follow me in public may bring blame. Therefore, choose wisely. Learn from other great men who teach Puranic

stories and wear proper attire. You are the ruler of the earth, surrounded by wise ministers and Brahmans learned in the Vedas and Shastras, yet many neglect the supreme spiritual wealth."

The king, humble and sincere, replied: "I have come to you as a suppliant with body, mind, and wealth. I am lacking in virtue—cleanse me, O Merciful One."

Recognizing his devotion, Ramdas felt deep compassion. "Go and bathe, and return quickly," he said, "for today is auspicious for you." Overjoyed, the king bathed in the Krishna River, carefully performing the rites. Using leaves, he carried flowers and fruits for offering, fashioned a water cup from large leaves, and prepared himself to worship his guru.

Before Ramdas, he made humble obeisances, placing body, mind, wealth, and kingdom at his guru's feet. "I shall consider myself fortunate even to be the carrier of your wooden shoes," he said, joining his palms in devotion.

Samartha placed his hands on the king's head and whispered the sacred mantra into his ear, imparting the secret knowledge of divine names. "I will instruct you in the outer practices of my order. Show compassion to all creatures, give respect to visiting saints, observe the eleventh-day, Ekadasi worship of Vishnu, keep night vigils, and maintain daily worship of Maruti," he instructed.

Shivaji followed each command with devotion. He washed his guru's feet, drank the water, offered a garland of tulsi leaves and flowers, and presented sweet fruits, which Ramdas tasted, acknowledging his heartfelt offerings. Remaining fruits were shared with the monkeys of the forest, and Shivaji partook of those Ramdas had not eaten, delighting in the simple devotion of the moment.

Then Ramdas spoke gently: "Return now to the city and perform your royal duties. You shall see me again in time."

The king replied: "I no longer wish to rule. My heart remains here, to serve you. I have already offered the glories of my kingdom to Rama. You sit upon the throne, and I shall serve as your humble servant."

Ramdas smiled: "O King, even in a forest free of distractions, attachment to power can bring one to ruin. Observe the examples of King Janaka, Rukmangada, Ambarisha, Harishchandra, Nala, and the Pandavas—they performed their duties and attained spiritual excellence. You have heard these stories. Now, follow your personal duties without attachment. What you have offered to your guru is sufficient; claim nothing as your own."

Shivaji prostrated again, tears of devotion streaming. Samartha commanded: "Rise, O King, and return. Your ministers await, and night approaches."

Though his heart longed to remain, Shivaji obeyed. Walking back to his troops, he kept the form of his guru in his heart. Upon his arrival, the ministers rejoiced, musicians welcomed him, and yet, within, the king no longer sought power or wealth. It was late at night when he reached his palace, and whispers spread: he had received the sacred discipleship mantra from Samartha Ramdas. Attendants, having watched his worship from afar, shared the wondrous details of what they had witnessed, further inspiring devotion throughout the kingdom.

Pandit Gaga, filled with resentment, exclaimed in disapproval, "What is all this I hear? This saint is not widely recognized. And yet, the king has accepted instruction from him without even inquiring about his caste. His mind is surely turned. This is truly shameful."

Thus, the gossips of various classes murmured among themselves. But the people, like timid owls, feared to speak openly in the presence of the king. Shivaji's mind, however, was entirely absorbed in devotion to his guru. As soon as the sun rose, he set out once more to visit Samartha Ramdas.

This time, he carried with him garments, ornaments, garlands of flowers, sandalwood paste, and other items for worship. Accompanying him were all eight of his ministers, merchants of the city, and many pious men, bearing banners and flags. A band played melodious music, and the procession made its way to the banks of the Krishna.

As the king's eyes fell upon his guru, he leaped from his palanquin. Keeping Samartha in view, Shivaji walked barefoot, approaching with reverence. Ramdas sat with eyes closed, absorbed in meditation, unaware of the world. At a motion from the king, the music ceased, and Shivaji stood before him, palms joined in devotion. Wild beasts wandered nearby, yet the king's heart was fearless, fixed entirely upon the form of his guru.

It was now the third watch of the day. Samartha opened his eyes, and the king, overcome with love, washed his guru's feet with his own hands. He marked Ramdas' forehead with the tilaka, anointed him with sandalwood paste, placed a garland of flowers around his neck, and wound the yellow robe about his waist. In his devotion, the king adorned Samartha with ornaments studded with jewels and offered incense, lights, and various delicacies prepared in ghee. He placed panasupari and gifts of money before him and circumambulated him, performing full obeisances, as was his custom.

After witnessing all this, Samartha spoke gently: "Return now to your city, O King. You are only increasing obstacles. My mind does not approve of this course."

But Shivaji, entirely absorbed in devotion, replied: "Until I see and worship you, I will take no water. Without you, my purpose cannot be fulfilled, O Samartha."

Thus, each day, the king came to worship him. Though the intensity of the king's devotion was limitless, Ramdas foresaw the hindrances it could create. Thinking carefully, he left all his garments and ornaments in their place and withdrew into the deep forest. Climbing a distant mountain, he resumed his worship in solitude.

When the king arrived, carrying all the materials for worship, he found the garments and ornaments lying there—but the guru himself was nowhere to be seen. Anxiety gripped him. With his attendants, some on horseback, others on foot, he searched the forest in vain. For three days, he neither ate nor drank, constantly exclaiming: "When shall I behold again that Cloud of Mercy? When I see him, I shall feast my eyes upon his form."

"I am ready to give up all that I possess," the king said to himself, "but may your name remain forever. O Sadguru, grant me the favor of your sight."

Hearing the king's pleading, Samartha Ramdas, manifested Himself at that very moment. The king, overwhelmed with devotion, beheld his guru once more, his heart overflowing with joy and reverence.

After Samartha Ramdas, left that place and arrived at Mahuli, where the Krishna and Venya rivers meet. Here, he began to display his strange and astonishing behavior. Climbing the trees along the riverbank, he acted as if possessed, performing antics that were both wild and inexplicable.

The boys of the town quickly gathered in large numbers to watch, laughing heartily at his playful gestures. Ramdas would wink at them, break off branches, and toss leaves to the ground. Sometimes they threw stones at him while he perched above, yet he bore it all with delight. He would release a branch and appear as though about to fall, only to land safely on the highest bough, leaping from one branch to another with astonishing agility.

The townspeople watched in amazement. "In a former birth, he must have been a monkey," some whispered. "Now God has given him a human body, but the past cannot be erased." Ramdas, hearing these remarks, was inwardly pleased and descended from the tree. The boys, teasing him further, even threw dung at him, but he accepted it all with serene joy, laughing heartily at their mischief.

At times, he would pick up stones and chase the children in playful pursuit, only for them to dodge him and rush to their mothers, exclaiming, “Mother, a crazy man has come! He runs after us with stones. We are frightened!” The mothers, cautious yet amused, would warn their children: “Do not go near him. If you do, you might one day become a yogi or mendicant like him.”

Yet Ramdas’ antics drew ever larger crowds. People marveled at his youthful beauty, estimating his age to be no more than twenty-five, and wondered what spirit or divine play possessed him. Smiling, rolling his eyes, and making faces, Ramdas delighted in the astonishment of the crowd. He would hold stones to throw at onlookers, while the children scurried to safety, only to return the next day.

In the forest, alone and filled with love, Ramdas would meditate upon Rama. Each day, he would enter the town to beg, visiting eleven houses in turn, never lingering for long. If a gift of food was offered, he would accept it with grace, then retreat once more to the forest. His diet was simple: cakes baked on leaves, plain water, no vegetables, no salt—yet he showed no preference for what was considered good or bad, for he had completely conquered worldly attachments.

At Mahuli, Ramdas’ playfulness took on a more instructive form. He played with the children, reciting abhangas and verses that carried deep spiritual meanings, though few were able to comprehend them. Through his antics, he illustrated profound truths.

One day, Ramdas proposed a game of viti dandu, the most dangerous of all games, and the boys eagerly gathered to play. As the game proceeded, a sharpened piece of wood flew unexpectedly and struck Ramdas on the forehead. He fell to the ground, unconscious. Panic spread among the boys. They pressed their hands to his nostrils, tried to revive him, poured water into his mouth—but he did not stir. Some began to weep aloud, exclaiming, “He is dead! What shall we do?”

Fearful of the consequences, the boys consulted one another in whispers. “We know nothing about this man,” they said. “If anyone in the city learns of this, the blame will fall on us. Our parents will punish us, and the chief of police will make the entire town suffer. We must act quickly and keep this secret.”

So, with heavy hearts but careful resolve, they dug a hole in the sand and, following their agreement, buried Ramdas in it. Each boy swore upon his mother and father not to reveal the matter. Meanwhile, the Merciful One, the Giver of Final Deliverance, lay motionless—but all the while, his mind was fixed on Rama. He was fully aware of the boys’ conversation, and in silence, he resolved: *“Let me watch the fun.”*

Thus, Ramdas remained in apparent lifelessness, just as Hanuman once lay unmoving while Ceylon burned. The boys, trembling at what they had done, finished burying him. Travelers passing by noticed the activity but, finding nothing amiss in their own affairs, continued on their way. The boys then bathed in the Krishna River and quietly returned home, keeping their promise of secrecy.

The next morning, they returned to the spot and found Ramdas exactly as they had left him, buried in the sand. Astonished, they kept their distance while continuing their games.

Meanwhile, King Shivaji, eager to see his guru, dispatched scouts far and wide. Horsemen searched twenty-five villages and traversed forests and mountains, yet Ramdas remained unseen. Some scouts met travelers along the way and inquired about the holy man. Fearful, the travelers replied, “At Mahuli, the boys dug in the sand and buried a sanyasi. There were no adults there. Perhaps he rests in meditation somewhere in the forest.”

Following this clue, the scouts combed the riverbanks near Mahuli, but the miraculous sanyasi was nowhere to be found. Finally, they returned to the city, perplexed. The mayor of Mahuli, alarmed, gathered the townspeople, fearing that the king’s guru had been harmed. Elder men suggested they dig him out, bundle him, and burn the body to erase all traces—so certain were they that the sanyasi was gone.

But when they began to dig, they discovered something utterly astonishing: there lay Samartha Ramdas, alive, lying as if dead, yet untouched by harm. The sight left everyone spellbound, a living miracle before their very eyes, revealing that the Guru was ever beyond the reach of fear, harm, and worldly illusion.

As the boys dug deeper into the sand, suddenly Ramdas gave a loud, piercing cry, a sound so powerful it made some bystanders reel and even faint. With a graceful and swift leap, Samartha sprang free and vanished into the forest. The townspeople stood frozen in terror, unable to comprehend what they had just witnessed.

One whispered, "It has turned out well—perhaps Fate has saved us from a great calamity." Another exclaimed, "What an unexplainable event! How could a person survive seven days buried beneath the earth?"

Word of the miracle quickly reached King Shivaji. The devoted ruler had been fasting all these seven days, tirelessly searching for his beloved guru with his army of attendants. The king's heart burned with longing; his eyes constantly sought the divine face of his Sadguru.

Meanwhile, the story of Ramdas' astonishing survival spread like wildfire throughout the villages. In homes and marketplaces, people whispered and speculated: "Ever since the king has made this seemingly crazy man his guru, he himself has gone mad. He wanders through forests, fasting and searching without rest. How can such a guru save him if he is unconscious?"

Yet none of these words touched the heart of the king. Immersed in limitless bhakti, Shivaji thought: "When shall I again behold the face of my Sadguru?"

As spies and scouts returned from distant villages, none brought news of Ramdas. Just when despair began to cloud the hearts of some, informants from Mahuli arrived to Maharaj Shivaji. Ramdas sought a quiet part of the forest. There, in solitude, he immersed himself completely in contemplation of Rama, pouring out heartfelt prayers and pleading with the Divine in words full of devotion and longing. Meanwhile, the king's scouts returned to Satara, bearing the joyous news that Ramdas had been found. King Shivaji, eager to pay his respects, brought with him the materials for worship. Upon meeting his guru, the king prostrated himself fully, offering obeisance and performing worship with the utmost devotion. He joined his hands in prayer and spoke words of praise, reminding Ramdas of his earlier promise to visit Satara. Ramdas simply replied: "I shall come in due course. Be patient." The king honored him once more, bowed deeply, and departed, his heart overflowing with devotion.

After this incident, in the quietude of the forest, Ramdas devoted himself to the worship of Shri Rama. By day, he performed namaskaras, bowing in reverence, and by night he offered heartfelt hymns and bhajans, drawing sincere and pious souls to his side. If any wise devotees spoke to him, he would advise them with gentle insistence to never forget the constant repetition of God's holy name, reminding them that the path of devotion required unbroken remembrance.

Among those who heard of Ramdas' virtues was Jayarama Gosavi Vadgavkar, a devoted servant of Krishna and husband of Rukmini. Having heard tales of Ramdas' holiness from the saints, he longed to meet the great yogi. Entering the forest in search, he suddenly beheld Ramdas in deep meditation. At the moment their eyes met, joy overflowed in both hearts. With joined palms and warm embraces, they greeted each other, their love shining like the meeting of the sun and the moon, or as though Vishnu and Shiva had come together in a moment of divine accord. It was as if Shri Rama and Krishna themselves were reunited, their essential unity revealed in this mortal meeting.

For days, the two saints conversed on the soul, on personal spiritual experience, and on the nature of bhakti. Ramdas continued his practice of begging food at eleven homes in the city, and together they shared these humble offerings, tasting neither pleasure nor displeasure, their minds completely free from attachment. Through such pure

companionship, they lived joyfully and fearlessly, apart from all worldly distractions and untouched even by the wild creatures of the forest.

One day, Ramdas proposed a grand deed: “Let us give a feast in this forest for a thousand Brahmans.” Jayarama readily agreed but reminded him, “You will have to invite them.” Smiling, Ramdas went into the town, where a great crowd of Brahmans had gathered, and courteously invited them to the feast.

The Brahmans laughed at first. “Who is to host this feast?” they asked. Ramdas replied, “Jayarama Gosavi will be your host.” Astonishment filled their hearts. They whispered among themselves, comparing the two saints to precious crystals, to Narada and Tumbara, always singing God’s names with nothing but their simple attire. “They are like the great sages of old, yet here they are, calling us to a feast in the forest.”

Some doubted, fearing the forest and its wild beasts. “This crazy fellow will surely take us into danger,” they murmured. But Ramdas reassured them: “Fear not. Rama has placed all creatures under control. Come without doubt, and witness the feast.”

Trusting in the saint’s word, the Brahmans set out, carrying their dining clothes, vessels, and plates. Upon arriving at Ramdas’ ashrama, they were awed by the sight: the trees were adorned with fruits and flowers, forming a natural pavilion. Raised platforms had been arranged, colorful designs decorated the entrances, and every detail spoke of care and reverence.

Jayarama and Ramdas received the Brahmans with deep devotion. Ramdas washed their feet, marked their foreheads with fragrant kasturi paste, adorned them with garlands, and offered incense and lights in ceremonial honor. Jayarama presented plates of food with love and precision—vegetables, delicacies, ghee, sugar, and every item in abundance. Ramdas reminded them that Shri Hari Himself was the true enjoyer of the feast, and thus all offerings were made with devotion.

Each Brahman found satisfaction, their hearts filled with joy and gratitude. In the giving and receiving of gifts and offerings, the glory of the saint became widely known. Even the skeptical and crooked-minded could not help but offer their own namaskaras to Ramdas, recognizing the divinity that shone through his every act.

The forest echoed with devotion, laughter, and the sound of divine play, as Ramdas and Jayarama taught that true spiritual feasting was not of the body alone but of the heart and soul, shared in the joy of bhakti and the love of God.

As the time of parting approached, Jayarama Gosavi Vadgavkar, devoted servant of Krishna, expressed his wish to return to his home. “I have a great desire to see you again,” he said, his heart full of attachment to the saint.

Ramdas smiled gently and replied, “If love truly resides in the heart, then though our bodies may be apart, no distance can separate us in spirit.” With these words, they made mutual namaskaras, bowing in reverence and devotion, and Jayarama began his journey home, carrying the joy of their meeting within him.

Once as Ramdas wandered through the Mahuli forest, he encountered a barber, who humbly approached him. “Let me serve you,” he said. “I have a desire in my heart to serve a saint.”

Ramdas looked upon him with discernment and said, “You may serve, but instruction from a guru comes only after sincere service. Serve with devotion first, then seek teaching.”

The barber responded with earnest sincerity: “I have no other wish. I shall serve you in every way, day and night, asking for nothing but the opportunity to remain at your feet.” Overjoyed by this heartfelt devotion, Ramdas laughed warmly and inquired his name. The barber replied: “I am Dattu, and I shall not leave these feet.” Thus, a new devotee joined the saint, his heart pure and his devotion unwavering.

Ramdas, seeing the sincerity in Dattu, the barber, accepted him as a disciple and instructed him: “Go into the town and beg for food.” Dattu obeyed, visiting eleven households and bringing back some flour, which Ramdas skillfully prepared into cakes baked on leaves. Together, they partook of this humble but sacred food, mindful of the devotion with which it had been obtained.

Meanwhile, King Shivaji, ever longing to see his guru, thought continuously: “When will the Swami favor me with his presence?” Ramdas, aware of the king’s loving devotion, said to Dattu: “It is now my duty to go to Satara. The king’s heart longs to see me.” Giving his disciple his bag and waiting for him to follow, Ramdas set off, singing verses in praise of Shri Rama, his voice suffused with devotion and joy. Words cannot convey the supreme bliss of that moment.

As they walked, they came upon a ripe field. Dattu, overcome with hunger, began roasting ears of corn, despite Ramdas’ gentle admonition that food obtained by begging alone is proper, and that taking without asking would bring blame. Before long, the field’s owner, smelling the smoke and seeing Dattu, ran toward them, furious. He beat Dattu and then struck Ramdas on the back with his sling.

Yet, Ramdas paid no mind to the pain, laughing to himself. Observing his guru’s composure, Dattu was filled with guilt and sorrow: “O Samartha, if I had not done wrong, this misfortune would not have befallen you.”

Ramdas comforted him with divine wisdom: “Do not grieve at dishonor, insult, or harm. One who remains indifferent in such circumstances is truly a man of God. Even if thieves steal your goods, if you remain unmoved, it is an act of love for Shri Rama. Joy and pain come from action, but the wise do not lose their peace over them.”

Dattu’s tears flowed freely as he confessed, and Ramdas instructed him: “Tell no one of this incident, not even the king. If pressed, remain silent. It is not for us to invite punishment or shame upon the innocent.” Dattu bowed at his feet, accepting the command with devotion.

Soon, the king’s scouts arrived, found Ramdas, and prostrated themselves in respect. They reported to the king that his guru was near, and King Shivaji, filled with devotion, advanced barefoot, accompanied by elephants, horses, banners, and musicians, the city resounding with the names of Hari. As the king saw his guru, he prostrated himself with love, and all around followed suit, garlanding Ramdas with flowers and scattering fragrant powders.

Seated in a palanquin, Ramdas entered the city amid the sound of drums and cannons. The king personally washed his feet, touched his eyes with the guru’s toe, and drank the sacred water, overwhelmed with joy. He anointed Ramdas with perfumed oils, bathed him, and dressed him in a radiant yellow robe, adorning him with garlands and jewels. The Brahmans recited sacred mantras, and incense, lights, and camphor were offered, while fruits, sweets, and delicacies were laid before him. The guru accepted the feast, offering it to Rama as the ultimate enjoyer, and all present partook in devotion and joy.

Afterwards, the king privately asked Dattu about the welts on Ramdas’ back. Dattu hesitated, recalling his guru’s command, but the king insisted. Seeing the king’s determination, Dattu revealed the entire story—from the roasting of corn to the beating in the field.

The king, though initially disturbed, partook of the sacred meal with Ramdas’ blessing and commanded that the field’s owner, along with all townspeople, be brought before him. The farmer, realizing the gravity of his act, feared for his life. But Ramdas, in his boundless mercy, comforted him, placed a shawl around his shoulders, and seated him near him.

Then, at Ramdas’ request, the king issued a royal decree granting the field to the farmer in perpetuity. The crowd marveled at the saint’s forgiving spirit. Ramdas taught: “One who returns good for evil, who holds friends and foes alike, is perfected in God’s eyes. By witnessing such mercy, the world itself is saved.”

The farmer, now overwhelmed with joy, prostrated at Ramdas' feet and returned home, greeted by his weeping and rejoicing family.

After fulfilling the king's heartfelt desire to see him, Samartha Ramdas remained in Satara for three days. During this time, unusual and joyful festivities took place. By day, feasts were arranged for Brahmans, and by night, kirtanas resounded in praise of Shri Hari, drawing crowds whose hearts were pierced with devotion. Ramdas, while bestowing gifts upon pandits, Brahmans, and Haridasa, himself remained entirely indifferent to worldly possessions.

When night fell, he awakened his disciple Dattu, gave him his bag, and departed for the forest. The next morning, King Shivaji arrived at the place where Ramdas had stayed, but found only his garments and adornments. Realizing that his guru must have returned to his forest abode, the king dispatched scouts to search for him. Soon, word came that Ramdas had been sighted in a nearby forest. The king, bringing materials for worship, went to meet him, and prostrated in reverence, as was his custom.

Ramdas informed the king of his intention to go to Trimbak for the Sinhastha festival. The king wished to accompany him, but Ramdas advised: "Remain in your city and continue your royal duties. The political climate is delicate; you may later undertake a pilgrimage." Respecting his guru's counsel, the king agreed, saying: "Your command is my authority."

The king, concerned for proper arrangements at the sacred city, requested that Ramdas carry money for charity and gifts for the Brahmans who would gather to see him. Though Samartha modestly said that none would recognize him, the king insisted, reminding him: "All this kingdom belongs to you, Svami. Why hesitate to carry what is needed for charity?" Samartha, seeing the king's devotion and desire, consented.

At the king's command, preparations were made with great ceremony. Ramdas was clothed in a gold-embroidered yellow robe, adorned with jewels and a diamond-studded crown dazzling to the eyes. The king personally garlanded him, anointed him with fragrant oils, placed offerings before him, and prostrated in homage. Two hundred horsemen were assigned for the journey, along with palanquins, a carriage, and two elephants—one bearing a canopied tower, the other a flag with the emblem of Maruti. The king also provided four hundred thousand rupees for expenses.

The royal procession escorted Samartha for twenty-four miles. When it was time for parting, the king's heart was heavy. Tears filled his eyes as he placed his head upon his guru's feet, unable to bear the thought of separation. Samartha comforted him: "Keep me always in your remembrance; I shall remain in your heart. We are no longer two." The king, moved beyond words, returned to Satara, offering a prostrate namaskara to his guru.

As Samartha journeyed, townspeople came out to see him. He regularly went from house to house with his disciples, begging for food, though he also had provisions from the king to feed Brahmans. At night, he lodged in towns where people came to hear his kirtanas, filling their hearts with devotion to God. Pilgrims accompanied him, and he attentively cared for their needs. Even Brahmans of high rank joined, drawn by love for God.

At Trimbak, Brahmans of the sacred city approached respectfully, inquiring about his family and ancestry. Ramdas replied with humility: "My father is Rama, my mother is Janaki, and I am called Ramdas." When asked to shave, he explained that one should not be shaved while one's parents are alive.

Generously, he distributed over one hundred thousand rupees to Brahmans, mendicants, and beggars. Taking only the food obtained by begging, he and Dattu lived in complete detachment from wealth, much to the surprise of the townspeople, who marveled: "With such riches at his disposal, yet he begs from house to house. How extraordinary!"

At night, Ramdas performed kirtanas with his disciples. His songs of love and devotion captivated all—Brahmans, women, Shudras, saints, and seekers of God. The hearts of those indifferent to worldly affairs were stirred, and all who listened were filled with divine love. Night after night, this devotion and joyous enthusiasm continued, as

Samartha Ramdas spread the message of bhakti, renunciation, and service to God, leaving a lasting impression upon all who witnessed it.

Some days passed, and then a remarkable event occurred. One day, Samartha Ramdas went out for recreation, carrying a galul—a pebble-shooting bow. He asked his disciple to set up a target: a small pile of sand with a banyan leaf placed on top.

With the first shot, Ramdas struck the leaf perfectly, creating a hole. The onlookers exclaimed in admiration: "Well done! He never misses the mark!" Encouraged, they set up another leaf as a target. But at that moment, a dove alighted behind the leaf. By accident, Ramdas' shot struck the bird, and it fell lifeless.

A ripple of shock and disapproval ran through the assembled Brahmans. "What sort of superman is this?" they murmured. "He has come to our sacred city, and here he takes life without pity. How can he be called holy?"

Samartha, smiling gently, called his secretary: "Bring the bird to me." Taking it in his hands, he felt pity for the tiny creature. Covering it with a handkerchief, he addressed the Brahmans: "You, dwellers of this sacred city, are reputed to be wise and learned. You perform austerities and accumulate merit. Now, spend a little of that merit and restore this bird's life. By doing so, you will gain honor for your good deeds, and I shall be freed of blame. I will grant you any gift you desire in return."

The Brahmans, still doubtful, replied: "Even if ten million rupees were spent, its life could not be restored. You, however, sing the praises of God with devotion. In your time, Rama caused a stone to transform into a human being, Hanuman and Vibhishana were granted immortality, and Lanka was captured by monkeys. Surely, your Rama can perform this simple act."

Ramdas smiled and said, "Is Rama not capable of this?" Then, taking the lifeless bird in his hands, he fed it water from the Godavari and softly repeated the name of Rama. Instantly, the bird fluttered and rose into the air. The Brahmans watched in astonishment as Ramdas swiftly caught it and placed it on his shoulder.

Turning to the Brahmans, he said: "You perform countless penances, shave your heads repeatedly, yet possess no direct manifestation of God. By merely remembering and invoking Rama, the simplest, most natural devotion, life has returned to this bird. Can there be a more powerful method? I see none."

The Brahmans, awestruck, bowed deeply before him. "He is truly a bhakta of Rama, an avatara of Maruti!" they proclaimed. "This noble Vaishnava has arisen to save the world."

Ramdas remained in the city of Trimbak for a full month. By day, feasts were arranged for the Brahmans, and at night, kirtanas in praise of Hari filled the air, moving the hearts of all who listened. Pilgrims, devotees, and townsfolk alike were drawn into the divine atmosphere, their souls stirred with love for God.

Then, one day, without informing anyone, Ramdas quietly slipped away. Barefoot and unclad, he journeyed alone to Panchavati, the sacred land where the Lord resided. Noticing his departure, the Secretary followed, bringing with him elephants, horsemen, and palanquins, and approached Samartha. He respectfully prostrated himself and asked, "Why did you leave without informing anyone?"

Ramdas smiled and replied, "The one whose leave I should take is Rama, who dwells in the heart. I have come to Panchavati to meet Him."

Thus speaking, Samartha entered the temple and prostrated himself at the great door with loving devotion. Here, God and devotee met face to face. Ramdas embraced the feet of Rama, and their hearts overflowed with joy, exceeding the bounds of human expression.

In this divine moment, Ramdas composed a beautiful description of the deity of Rama, capturing its sacred form and eternal grace. After this, he worshipped the Lord with all the customary ceremonies—offering garments, ornaments, and fragrant flowers, accompanied by the chanting of mantras and the music of many instruments. He made prostrate namaskaras to the Lord and then turned to Maruti, offering his devotion.

In response, Maruti appeared in visible form, speaking words of assurance to Ramdas: "Whenever you think of me, consider me as present with you." Overcome with joy, Ramdas' heart filled with divine bliss.

He then turned his attention to the people, distributing gifts to the Brahmans, and feeding the citizens of the sacred city with various delicacies. In serving them, he delighted the Dweller-in-Ayodhya, Lord Rama.

Ramdas in Panchavati and beheld the sacred deity of Rama. With a heart filled with love and sincerity, he worshipped the Lord, sang His praises, and satisfied the Brahmans with Prasadam.

After sunset, Ramdas began his kirtana. Hearing of it, learned Pandits, Vedics, and other distinguished people gathered, along with women, Shudras, Gujaratis, and pious pilgrims. A vast crowd assembled at the great temple gate, all eager to listen. The sound of cymbals, veenas, and powerful drums filled the air, and Ramdas, filled with joy, began to sing abhangas in his gentle and captivating voice. His life itself reflected his words, and his fame had spread far and wide.

Pleased by this heartfelt praise, Lord Rama granted Ramdas a direct and visible manifestation. Though unseen by others, the Lord spoke privately with His devotee, assuring him that there was no difference between them. He declared that Maruti was His very life, and that Ramdas was his manifestation in this age for the salvation of the world. Rama promised that whenever Ramdas remembered Him in times of distress, He would be present, and instructed him to spread His praise among mankind. After giving this assurance, the Lord vanished, and Ramdas returned to outer consciousness.

Though this divine experience lasted only a moment, Ramdas beheld many wondrous visions. Regaining awareness, he continued the worship of Rama and led the assembly in the loud repetition of God's names, filling all space with devotion. He fastened bells to his ankles and danced as he sang. The crowd clapped, snapped their fingers, and many lost awareness of their bodies in divine absorption.

Ramdas then taught the supreme path, declaring that constant repetition of the holy name of Sri Hari alone purifies the soul. All rituals, austerities, and sacred baths are contained within the divine Name. One who chants it fearlessly is protected from all obstacles by the Lord Himself.

He illustrated this truth with sacred examples. Shiva found no relief from poison until he remembered Rama's name. Kuntani, burdened with sins, was liberated merely by uttering Rama's name. Ajamila, though fallen, was saved by remembering Narayana while calling his son. In Kashi, Vishveshvara himself proclaimed the power of the Name. Shuka, though liberated, delighted in singing the Bhagavata with love. Those who relish kirtana are freed from the cycle of birth and death, and God remains near them always. Thus Ramdas urged all to sing the pastimes of the Lord with sincerity, assuring that God, pleased by such devotion, unfailingly guides the devotee. Such were Ramdas' kirtanas. His listeners were completely absorbed, tears flowing from their eyes, cries of love filling the air. He concluded with final verses of praise, performing arati to the deity of Lord Rama, and amid joyous shouts of victory, sweet offerings were distributed.

Once in Panchavati, Samartha entered the temple and sought Rama's permission to depart. With deep humility he prayed that his love might remain unbroken and that he might again be blessed with the Lord's vision. Declaring that Rama alone was his God, he affirmed that he had abandoned all worldly ties to attain Him. Rama's visible form, he

said, was his greatest treasure, and the divine Name his only means of liberation. As he spoke, tears of love filled his eyes.

Moved by this devotion, Shri Rama drew Ramdas close to His heart and spoke words of comfort. Ramdas then circumambulated the Lord, bowed prostrate, and departed, keeping the temple to his right.

At the Secretary's request, Ramdas was seated in a palanquin with great reverence. Fly-whisks were waved, musical instruments resounded, and elephants led the procession, their coverings embroidered with the emblem of Maruti. Haridasas loudly chanted the name of Rama as the great assembly proceeded to Takali.

At Takali, Uddhava Gosavi and the townspeople welcomed Ramdas with prostrations. The pilgrims camped near the temple of Maruti. Ramdas ordered a grand feast for Brahmans from nearby towns, while he himself went begging, setting an example of renunciation. After bathing and completing the rites, he lovingly anointed and adorned Maruti with sacred offerings, incense, lights, and food.

The Brahmans were worshipped and feasted to full satisfaction, followed by the townspeople and the king's attendants, who all ate together with Ramdas. As evening fell, kirtana began. Uddhava Gosavi first led the chanting, followed by other Vaishnavas, and finally Ramdas himself rose to sing and dance in divine joy, crying out victory to noble Rama.

Listening to his kirtana, hearts turned away from worldly attachment, and many were inspired to walk the path of devotion and liberation. Some sought initiation, and Ramdas instructed all to worship Rama constantly while living joyfully in the world, and to revere Maruti to overcome life's countless obstacles.

The space resounded with clapping hands and cries of victory. Arati was performed to the deity of Lord Rama and Maruti, final hymns were sung, and sweet offerings distributed. Sitting before Maruti, Ramdas composed a final abhang, praising Hanuman as the remover of obstacles and the beloved servant of Rama, who swiftly fulfills the sincere longing of the heart. Thus the night passed in divine devotion, and as the sun rose, the gathered devotees returned to their homes, their hearts filled with peace and joy.

After remaining three days at Takali, Samartha set out with his followers, carrying in his heart the wish to see his parents. Moving joyfully along the banks of the Godavari, he performed regular kirtanas, and villagers came forth everywhere to behold and honor him.

Reaching Jamba, he encamped outside the town and sent messengers to summon the local officials and respected citizens, but specifically instructed that his father should not be called. When the town officers and people arrived, Samartha sat upon a seat of honor, and all bowed before him. As they looked upon his face, some began to recognize familiar signs and recalled Surya Jipanta's son, who had renounced the world long ago, even leaving his marriage unfinished. At last, the town astrologer openly identified him as Narayana, the son of Surya Jipanta.

When the officials sought to summon his father, Samartha firmly objected, saying that one must never call parents or the guru to oneself, but should go to them instead. Rising at once, he walked swiftly toward his parents' home, driven by deep longing. News reached his mother, and her heart overflowed with joy, as if Rama himself had returned to Ayodhya after exile.

Ramdas soon arrived at his parents' house amid a large gathering. He first prostrated himself before his father, then bowed to his brother, and finally to his mother. Unable to restrain her emotions, his mother embraced him tightly, tears flowing as she lamented his sudden renunciation and long separation. Seeing her sorrow, Samartha was inwardly moved and composed abhangas to remove her misunderstanding and reveal the inner truth of his renunciation.

Hearing his words, his parents' hearts were filled with peace and pride. They declared that a great jewel of devotion and a savior of their lineage had been born into their family. Ramdas and his brother, Rami Ramdas, were of one heart and one mind, bound by mutual love, just as Rama and Bharata were united in devotion and harmony.

After meeting his parents and brother, Samartha entered the town to beg for alms. The people watched in amazement and remarked that though the king and his subjects were devoted to him, he still lived solely on begged food. They recognized this strict detachment as a rare gift of God.

At Ramdas' home, a grand feast was prepared, and all the Brahmans of the town were invited. Samartha himself worshipped them, and after the offering ceremony was completed, all were served and satisfied. A kirtana followed, filling the gathering with devotion.

After remaining there for three days, Ramdas set out for Satara, taking his parents and brother with him. Samartha rode on horseback, Ramdas traveled in a palanquin, Surya Jipanta sat on an elephant, and the brother was carried in a chair. Town officials accompanied them for a long distance and pleaded with Samartha to return again, but he replied that after introducing his parents to the king, he would send them back home.

Wherever they halted on the journey, Brahmans were honored with food and gifts, nightly kirtanas were held, and Samartha personally attended to his parents' needs. In this manner they finally reached Satara.

Samartha camped in a garden outside the city, and upon hearing the news, King Shivaji was filled with joy. He ordered his ministers and army to escort the saint with great honor. The king himself walked on foot and, upon seeing Samartha from afar, prostrated before him. Drawing nearer, he offered repeated salutations, and Samartha lovingly embraced him.

When the king learned that Samartha's parents were present, he bowed before them with deep reverence, worshipped them, adorned them with garlands and fragrant powders, and rejoiced that his long-cherished wish had been fulfilled. The procession then advanced toward the palace, with Surya Jipanta and his elder son seated on the elephant, Samartha in a palanquin, and the king walking beside him, fanning him with a fly-whisk, while music resounded throughout the city.

At the palace gate, the king waved gold coins before his guru and scattered them among the mendicants. As Samartha entered, guns were fired in celebration. The king worshipped him with devotion, bathed him, clothed him in yellow garments, adorned him with ornaments, and performed the full ceremonial honors. He then honored Samartha's parents in the same manner and distributed gifts, food, and offerings to all.

A grand feast followed, and later that night a kirtana was held, featuring scriptural discourse, singing, dancing, and the narration of the deeds of Lord Rama, Lord Krishna, and the incarnations. The devotion continued deep into the night, ending with the waving of lights and the distribution of sweets.

At the close of the gathering, Samartha explained to the king that doubts regarding his family had arisen among some Brahmans and that he had brought his parents to remove all suspicion. Hearing this, the king humbly placed his head at Samartha's feet and acknowledged that the saint, who knows the hearts of all, had dispelled every doubt through his grace.

After a month had passed in this manner, with the king personally serving him, Samartha said, "I have now made you acquainted with my parents. It is time to send them back to their home, for I must retire again into the forest." The king replied, "Your wish is my command."

He worshipped Samartha's parents with reverence, gifted them garments, ornaments, and adornments, and arranged horses, a carriage, and funds for their journey. He also honored their relatives at home. Further, the king had copper plates inscribed and sealed with the royal mark, granting them ownership of Jamba, thus bestowing exceptional honor. These plates were entrusted to Suryajipanta.

Turning to Samartha's mother, the king said with deep emotion, "Blessed indeed are your deeds from former births, for you gave birth to Samartha. He has saved the world, and in the future he will save countless souls. Dhruva was born to Suniti, Prahlada to Kayadhu, and Hanuman to Anjani, who served Rama. In the same way, O Mother, you have given us a Universal Guru before our very eyes." Saying this, the king fell at her feet.

The king himself escorted them on horseback for a distance before seeing them off. Meanwhile, Samartha took Dattu with him, renounced all garments and ornaments, clad himself only in a simple cloth, and joyfully disappeared into the deepest parts of the forest, resuming his life of austere solitude.

On returning to Satara, King Shivaji discovered that his Sadguru had renounced all garments and ornaments and vanished into the forest, taking only Dattu with him. The king then understood Samartha's true intent.

Samartha joyfully resumed his forest life, delighting in complete detachment from worldly ties. He reflected that parents, relatives, royal honor, and public devotion were all forms of maya, while Rama alone was eternal. To him, Rama was mother, father, friend, kin, lineage, and savior from the ocean of worldly existence. Absorbed in such thoughts, Samartha sang Rama's praises with such purity that wild animals lost their fear. Tigers, wolves, deer, and hares gathered peacefully around him.

Dattu went daily into the town to beg for flour. Samartha baked simple cakes on leaves, and they ate together with contentment. Though people feared to approach because of the wild beasts, King Shivaji came alone, worshipped his Sadguru, and returned quietly at Samartha's request.

A Brahman from Mahuli lived without learning, family, or steady livelihood. Though outwardly poor and wandering, his heart was tightly bound by desire for good food, comfort, and public respect. Wherever charity or feasting was announced, he rushed there eagerly. Though he received alms often, his dissatisfaction never ended, for desire cannot be filled.

Having once attended a grand feast given by King Shivaji in honor of Samartha Ramdas, the Brahman became obsessed with that memory. He reasoned within himself that if he became Ramdas' disciple, he would gain honor as the guru's follower, enjoy royal favor, and never lack fine food. Thus his wish for discipleship arose not from devotion, but from greed.

Driven by this hope, he ventured into the dense forest to seek Ramdas. There he saw Samartha seated fearlessly among wild animals, even stroking a tiger. Terrified, the Brahman hesitated, but Samartha called him gently and assured him of safety. Approaching with awe, the Brahman requested initiation, falsely claiming freedom from all worldly attachments.

Samartha perceived the man's inner motive but, leaving the outcome to Rama's will, accepted him outwardly. After bathing and ritual observances, the Brahman received the mantra. That day, however, he was tested. Samartha prepared only coarse leaf-baked cakes from begged flour and ate them with joy. When King Shivaji arrived bearing rich offerings, Ramdas distributed them to monkeys and gave his own simple cake to the king, who ate it with devotion. The Brahman, witnessing this, was inwardly shaken.

Unable to endure hunger, fear of the forest, and the discipline of begging, the Brahman soon regretted his choice. He concluded that Ramdas' path was too difficult and abandoned him, seeking another guru who lived amid comfort and honor.

When he returned to Ramdas to renounce discipleship, Samartha instructed him to spit out a mouthful of water, thereby symbolically releasing the mantra. Miraculously, the sacred syllables appeared on the ground, signifying the gravity of his rejection. Though freed from the mantra, the Brahman immediately lost spiritual clarity and inner strength.

Seeking initiation elsewhere, he was rebuked and refused, for abandoning one's guru out of desire is a grave fault. Thus disgraced and restless, the Brahman wandered on, having lost both spiritual and worldly gain.

Through this episode, Samartha revealed that discipleship rooted in appetite and ambition cannot endure. Only sincere longing for God, patience in hardship, and steady service to the Sadguru lead to liberation. Desire, even in a renunciate's garb, remains the greatest obstacle on the spiritual path.

Despite ridicule from ignorant critics who called him "mad," King Shivaji's devotion to Samartha never wavered. Like the righteous kings of old, he earned lasting glory through unwavering bhakti to his Guru.

Samartha Ramdas, indifferent to all worldly things, once went down to the bank of the Krsna River, where he sat quietly in contemplation. At that very time, a large band of pilgrims arrived and encamped at that spot. Some tied bells to their feet and danced in ecstasy, worshipping one another in their unrestrained enthusiasm. Others took cymbals and clappers in their hands, singing the abhangas of Tukaram. They lovingly described the greatness of Pandhari, and many lost all bodily consciousness in divine bliss.

There were also groups carrying banners, loudly crying out the holy name of Vitthala. Witnessing these scenes, Ramdas politely asked them, "Where is this pilgrim band going?" They replied, "We are going to Pandhari."

The pilgrims pitched their tents on the riverbank and settled down for the night. As the sun set, Ramdas sat in meditation, bringing to mind the Husband of Sita, Sri Rama. In that meditation, the Lord of Ayodhya revealed Himself. Ramdas offered Him fruit and worshipped both Sri Rama and Hanuman. Absorbed in divine thought, he began to describe the goodness of Rama. The pilgrims, seeing him in this attitude of devotion, bowed to him.

The saints and good people among them then said, "You must come with us to Pandhari. It will gladden all our hearts if you agree." Ramdas asked them, "What deity is there? Tell me in detail—who has given a direct vision to devotees? Whom shall I behold in visible form?"

They replied, "The deity there is Krsna, the eighth avatara, who once lived at Dvaraka, but has now chosen this place. Long ago there was a bhakta named Pundalika, devoted to serving his parents. The Supreme Lord, pleased with his devotion, came to grant him darsana. The Lord said to Pundalika, 'I am pleased with you. Ask of Me any boon, however impossible it may seem, and I shall grant it.' Pundalika replied, 'O Lord, remain here forever, with Thy feet placed upon this brick, Thy hands on Thy hips, and Thy gaze fixed to the tip of Thy nose. For the sake of protecting Thy bhaktas in every age, abide on the bank of the Bhima, and willingly assume the name Panduranga.'

The Lord accepted and said, 'So be it. This city of Pandhari shall be a purifying place—a Vaikuntha upon earth. I shall remain here at the door of My bhakta, Pundalika, for the sake of My devotees.' From that time Pandhari has been sanctified, and Panduranga has become the refuge of saints in distress. In this very Kaliyuga, countless bhaktas have received His direct vision—Bhanudas, Nivrtti, Jnandev, Savata Mali, Namdev, Kurmbhar, Gora Kumbhar, Janardana, Eknatha, and many others. All these have worshipped Panduranga with unwavering devotion. Therefore, O Ramdas, you too must come with us to Pandhari."

To this, Ramdas replied, "Sri Rama is my chosen deity. Aside from Him my heart finds no resting place. Day and night my eyes long to see the Bearer of the bow, and I wish only to hear the story of Rama narrated by Valmiki. What business have I elsewhere?" Seeing his firm resolve, the pilgrims departed for Pandharpur.

Soon another group of pilgrims arrived on the Krsna's bank. They too urged Ramdas to join them. He answered, "If the Lord of Ayodhya is there, take me with you. Otherwise, I have no desire to go." They replied, "Rama pervades every place. Using the eye of knowledge, see Him within yourself." On hearing this, Samartha composed two abhangas declaring his one-pointed devotion to Rama, astonishing the saints. They realized that just as the cataka

bird drinks only rainwater, or the cakora bird longs only for moonlight, so too Ramdas' heart thirsted for none but Rama. Finding him immovable, they left.

Then Sri Rama Himself, delighted with Ramdas' steadfast bhakti, decided to enact His lila. He appeared in the form of a Brahmana. Ramdas had just bathed and prepared leaf-cakes for offering. Seeing the Brahmana, he bowed and invited him: "This is food obtained by bhiksa. Please accept it. Through your mouth, Sri Rama Himself is satisfied."

The Brahmana smiled and said, "It was My heart's wish to meet you. Wandering in the forest, I have come here." He went to bathe in the Krsna, applied gopicandana to His forehead, and returned. Though disguised as a Brahmana, His divine brilliance could not be concealed. For the sake of His bhakta, however, He humbled Himself.

Ramdas spread out palasa leaves, placed the cakes upon them, and offered them with devotion, saying: "O Merciful Lord, worshipped by the Blue-throated Siva, and the heart's jewel of Anjani's son, to Thee I offer this food today." The Husband of Rukmini ate the humble cakes with delight, as if it were nectar surpassing Indra's offering. "I have been fasting for many days," He said. "Today, unexpectedly, I feast with you in this forest." After finishing, He cleansed His mouth with tulasi leaves, joyfully given by Ramdas.

Then Ramdas asked, "O Svami, where do you live? From where have you come today? To what place are you bound? Tell me your name." The Brahmana replied, "I have long dwelt at Pandhari with my consort. I go from place to place, begging alms. In the month of Kartika, I went on pilgrimage to Alandi, where Tukaram kindly took me to Dehu. He too is one of My devotees, like yourself, indifferent to worldly ties. Now, the festival of Asadhi Ekadasi is near, and all My devotees gather at Pandharpur. Therefore I must go there. People everywhere call Me Vitthalabhata.

I desire that you should come with Me. Together we shall rejoice in Pandhari. For it has always been My nature to delight in the company of saints."

Ramdas replied, "I love only the Lord of Ayodhya. He has entered my heart. I do not wish to contemplate other deities. Wherever He is, I will go, prostrating myself." To this, Vitthala answered, "The deity of Panduranga is at Pandhari, and before Him stands Hanuman. He will cause you to meet Lord Rama. Have no doubt."

Hearing these words, Ramdas' heart melted with longing. He rose at once and set out for Pandharpur. Dattu, the barber, walked beside him carrying the begging bag, while God and His devotee walked together joyfully. Along the way they begged for alms, baked cakes upon leaves, and ate happily in each other's company.

It was the month of Asadha, the rainy season. Ramdas walked barefoot, often pierced by thorns, but lost in divine absorption he did not feel them. Vitthala, however, noticed and tenderly removed the thorns, caring for His bhakta like a mother for her child. As they descended towards Pandhari, the temple domes appeared from afar. At that sight, Ramdas composed an abhanga, his heart overflowing with joy.

An innumerable host of pilgrims was walking along, joyfully singing hymns, playing instruments, waving banners, and shouting, "Victory to God!" They greeted each other with namaskaras, ignoring caste or status. All pride was gone; they saw God equally in all beings and bowed even at the feet of saints.

Sri Ramdas, witnessing this, was astonished. In all his wanderings he had never seen such humility. He thought, "This place, Pandhari, is truly filled with God's name and devoid of pride."

Accompanied by the Brahmana Vitthalabhata, Ramdas approached the great temple door. Suddenly Vitthalabhata excused himself, saying he had to meet a patron, and instantly vanished. Dattu asked, "Where has he gone? Who was he really?" Ramdas, puzzled, replied, "It was none other than the Lord of Pandhari Himself, who came in disguise, guiding me with His own hands."

At the Eagle platform, a lively kirtana was underway with God's names sung in love. Moved by devotion, Ramdas composed verses on the spot, then bowed to all the saints. Just then he saw the deity of Maruti (Hanuman), and his heart overflowed with joy. He worshipped Him, asking, "Where is Rama?"

Maruti then recounted a story from ancient times: how Rama conquered Ravana, restored Sita, gave immortality to Vibhisana, and ruled Ayodhya for eleven thousand years, during which there was no death, poverty, or falsehood. Finally, Rama departed in a celestial chariot, but promised Hanuman: "Whenever you contemplate Me three times a day, I will manifest in your heart. And in My avatara as Krsna, I will meet you in visible form."

Obeying this, Maruti roamed sacred places, until he reached Dvaraka, a golden city like Lanka. Angered, he began to destroy its groves, causing alarm. The Yadavas reported this to Krsna and Balarama. First, Garuda (the eagle mount) was sent to subdue the "monkey," but Maruti struck him unconscious. Revived, Garuda confessed that this was no ordinary monkey but the eternal devotee of Rama, as mighty as Rudra at the end of time.

Still, armies of Yadavas were sent, but Maruti bound them all with his tail and even dipped them into the sea, humiliating them. Narada laughed, saying: "This monkey is supreme, none can defeat him."

Finally, Krsna revealed Himself as Rama, with Balarama as Laksmana, and Rukmini as Sita. Surrounded by monkeys and brothers Bharata and Satrughna (manifested by Krsna), the divine play was enacted. Maruti, beholding Rama, embraced Him with overflowing devotion. Rama said sweetly: "Did I not promise you this vision? Though I appear as both Rama and Krsna, We are one." Then He resumed His form as Krsna.

Hearing this, Ramdas was filled with wonder. He bowed to Maruti and then stood before Panduranga (Vitthala). By the power of bhakti, Ramdas now saw Panduranga transform into Rama Himself—holding bow and arrow, with Sita beside Him, monkeys around, and the holy river before him as though it were the Sarayu. Overwhelmed with love, Ramdas experienced that Rama and Krsna are one essence. God then told him: "Go to the Eagle platform where the saints are gathered, and perform a kirtana."

The God-loving devotees marveled at this wonder, for before their eyes Rama's lila was enacted. Those saints who had accompanied God in His avataras through many ages rejoiced in meeting the Husband of Sita once again. They recognized that by Ramdas' devotion, Rama had revealed Himself visibly.

Many great saints were present: Himbaraja Bava of Daithana, Tukaram Svami of Dehu, Manakoji Bodhala, Vamana Svami the scholar, Jayarama Gosavi, Sheikh Muhammad of Chambhargonde, and Ranganatha Svami with his brother Atya of Higadi. All of them testified with joy: "We had never before seen the avatara-deeds of Rama with our own eyes. Today, through Ramdas, our heart's longing has been fulfilled."

The ordinary pilgrims, however, continued to see Pandharpur just as it was—Vitthala upon His brick, hands on hips, gazing down the bridge of His nose, and the Bhima river flowing nearby. But to the saints it was all transformed: Ayodhya in place of Pandharpur, Sarayu in place of Bhima, and Vitthala revealed as Rama. What was cowherds' dancing to the ordinary pilgrims appeared to the saints as the gamboling of Vanara hosts around their Lord.

In awe, the saints reflected and then said to Ramdas: "By your devotion, the dark-complexioned Panduranga has willingly become Rama. Just as Maruti once went to Dvaraka and Sri Krsna took the form of Rama for him, so too has God now fulfilled your wish. But we too long to see Him again as Vitthala, the standing Lord of Pandharpur, feet together upon the brick, hands on hips, in the form He gave to Pundalika. Pray that He reveal Himself thus again."

Hearing this, Ramdas prayed earnestly: "O Lord, Husband of Sita, Life of the World! As once You became Panduranga for Pundalika's sake, now show Yourself again in that beloved form." At his prayer, the deity before them resumed its appearance as Vitthala, standing upon the brick. The saints were astonished, and bowed at Ramdas' feet, saying: "Through you we have seen both Rama and Panduranga."

From that time onward, they honored Ramdas as a manifestation of Hanuman himself, for by his devotion the Lord had revealed His avatara-lilas.

Then the saints and Vaisnavas, filled with joy, circumambulated the city, singing loudly. Cymbals, vinas, and drums resounded; people danced in ecstasy, some wearing ankle-bells, others clapping hands, others swaying with love. Some sang the names and deeds of saints, others cried out in devotion. Many lost bodily awareness, overcome with divine love.

Amid this rejoicing, Ramdas exclaimed: "Blessed is this place, where pride is destroyed and love alone remains!" His eyes filled with tears. The saints agreed, saying: "This is no mere man—he is an avatara in visible form."

At last they gathered on the sands of the river, praising God, and attended a kirtana. Tukaram Svami of Dehu, the avatara of Namadeva, was singing his abhangas. An innumerable crowd had assembled; as he sang, people lost all bodily consciousness. Ramdas too sat listening silently for three watches of the night, deeply moved. When the kirtana ended with arati and prasada, the saints embraced one another and then turned to Ramdas, saying: "Now, we wish to hear your kirtana."

On the following day, at the sacred Garuda-mandapa, preparations were made for the great assembly. A dense crowd of pilgrims gathered at the temple gate, shouting aloud the holy names of God with cries of "Jaya! Jaya!" The atmosphere resounded with devotion.

Among those present were illustrious saints—Himbaraja, Bodhala, the world-renowned Tukarama, and the God-intoxicated Jayarama Gosavi—all seated with reverence to listen to Ramdas' discourse. Alongside them were also saints like Sheikh Muhammad, an ocean of wisdom, and Hangosvami Nigadtakara, together with many noble Vaisnavas. The crowd was so thick that no path could be seen through it, and the news of this gathering spread swiftly through the sacred city.

Prominent Brahmanas too assembled, including Vamana Svami, a celebrated pandita well-versed in the sastras and the Vedas, known not only for his learning but also for his poetic genius and God-centered heart. Thus, both elders and youths, the learned and the simple, all came together, seated in expectation. Drums and cymbals played in sweet harmony, hymns were sung, and the holy name of Vitthala filled the air with victorious cries that seemed to overflow into the heavens, as if bringing delight even to Sri Krsna Himself.

Then Ramdas, quietly repeating to himself the names of the Lord of Ayodhya, the Husband of Sita, the deity worshipped even by Siva, rose to begin his exposition. He recited a few inspiring abhangas of his own composition, which were later preserved in writing. His poetry bore the fragrance of divine inspiration, vast in scope, and his eloquence was like that of Brhaspati himself—yet his heart remained free of pride.

In humility he addressed the saints, saying: "What can I speak before you? I know not how to sing, nor have I any skill. Since childhood I have wandered in forests, without committing poetry to memory or acquiring philosophical learning. My speech lacks sweetness, I know not the laws of right and wrong, nor have I studied the Vedas. In music too I am ignorant of time and harmony. In every way I am deficient, of humble estate—Rama alone is witness to this."

Hearing this, the saints replied with affection: "Do not belittle yourself. The Lord of Ayodhya, the Husband of Sita, is your unfailing helper. Without His grace, even skill is fruitless—like the fleshy swelling on a goat's neck, which yields no milk to the suckling young. Why seek common herbs when nectar itself is within reach? Why long for a lamp when the radiant sun has risen? Was it not through your wish that the deity of Panduranga transformed, holding bow and arrow as Rama? All the saints here witnessed that wondrous change. You are verily the avatara of Maruti, come to uplift the world. Therefore, sing with loving devotion the praises of Panduranga."

Thus encouraged by the saints, Ramdas' heart overflowed with joy. With deep love he began singing an abhanga, glorifying the supreme power of bhakti, declaring that the divine name alone is the savior, capable of delivering even the most ignorant soul.

When his discourse ended, the assembly resounded with jubilant cries of "Jaya! Jaya!" from the noble Vaisnavas, and the holy name of Vitthala rang aloud. Lamps were then lit, sweet praises were sung, and the Lord—the Husband of Rukmini—was worshipped with the waving of lights. Facing the deity of Panduranga, all present bowed in reverence, their hearts brimming with bliss.

The festival then continued for seven days, and on the full moon day the Gopalkala pageant began. The chariot carrying the deity of Vitthala set out, accompanied by the sound of sweet instruments, groups of singers, cymbals, and drums. A vast crowd of pilgrims moved towards Gopalpura, waving banners of seven colors and eagle flags, while the bhaktas sang and danced, calling aloud the name of Vitthala.

The gods themselves looked on from their heavenly chariots, marveling that while they had been given the nectar of immortality, the nectar of love had been granted to the saints on earth, making their joy immeasurable. They reflected that, because of the devotion of Pundalika to his parents, the Supreme Brahman now wandered these sands of Pandharpur, meeting His devotees and protecting them from worldly distress.

The Vaisnavas reached Gopalpura, where they worshipped Puspavati, and then proceeded to see Muralidhara (Krsna with His flute). Falling in prostration, they began the dramatic kirtana.

Himbaraja led the play, with other saints joining. They dramatized episodes from Krsna's childhood as told in Sri Ekanatha's poetry: Krsna eating dirt and showing Yasoda the universe in His mouth, lifting Mount Govardhana to shelter the cowherds, stealing milk, and being tied by His mother. Jayarama acted as Krsna, while Tukarama took the role of Pundalika, warning Krsna not to corrupt the cows. They also enacted the playful games of hide-and-seek, ball, and bat, with the cowherd girls teasing Krsna for cheating.

The saints humorously portrayed the gopis bathing unclothed in the Yamuna, Krsna taking their clothes and climbing a tree, and then making them come out with hands raised in reverence to the sun before returning their garments. All pride and rivalry were cast aside in these plays, and the pilgrims rejoiced, laughing heartily at the scenes.

The saints then acted out philosophical riddles, while Tukarama sang abhangas that conveyed their meaning. When the cowherds said to Krsna, "We are hungry, give us food," Himbaraja (as Krsna) distributed curds mixed with popped rice. The gods, desiring to taste this offering, took on human form and ate the rice, declaring it sweeter than nectar.

Afterward, the saints returned to Pandharpur with music, singing, and waving flags, the very sky resounding with Vitthala's name. At Padmatirtha, Himbaraja amused the crowd with juggling, and everyone exclaimed with delight at the day's novelties.

Ramdas was deeply moved by what he saw. With his own eyes he had witnessed Krsna's lilas enacted, and his heart overflowed with joy. At the end of the day, the saints circumambulated Pandharpur, then entered the temple, where they prostrated before the Lord standing on His brick.

There, Ramdas embraced the deity with love, placed his head at the Lord's lotus feet, and said: "I am going back to my forest home. You must give me leave." The Lord of Rukmini replied tenderly: "When will you return again?" Ramdas said: "Nothing is in my hands. It was You, Lord of the World, who took the form of a Brahmana and brought me here, and even drew out the thorns from my feet with Your own hands. Through You I have met the saints, and my heart is overflowing with happiness. I only beg one gift: that You never forget me, just as a mother never forgets her child."

Hearing these words, Cakrapani (Krsna) wept and said: "I, the Giver of Liberation, am always with you—whether in the forest or among men." Ramdas embraced His feet, fixed the Lord's form in his memory, and departed. With his

disciple Dattu, he left Pandharpur joyfully, remembering the bliss he had experienced. On the road, everything he saw—trees, stones, rivers, mountains—appeared to him in the form of Rama.

On the first day, Ramdas arrived at Narasipura. At the sacred confluence of the Hira and Bhima rivers, he and his companion bathed with reverence. Afterward, they went to the temple, where Samartha bowed fully before the divine image, offering his heart in devotion.

Taking his begging bag, Ramdas immediately entered the town. Passing swiftly through the narrow lanes, he cried aloud, "Victory to Rama," awakening devotion wherever he went. He visited eleven houses and then returned to the riverbank. There he found Dattu, who had just gathered dry dung for fuel.

With his own hands, Ramdas cleansed a spot, kindled the fire, bathed again according to custom, and prepared simple cakes baked on leaves. When the humble meal was ready, a strange and wondrous event occurred.

Lord Krishna Himself appeared before Ramdas in the form of a weak and hungry Brahman. Approaching him, the Lord said, "Know me to be Narahari in visible form, burning with hunger."

Ramdas replied with humility, "If you are willing to eat these coarse cakes without any relish, then sit with us and accept this food, and make me, a lowly man, one who has a protector."

The Lord of the eagle banner smiled and answered, "I delight in bran cakes, yet these appear even better." Saying so, He bathed and sat down to eat. Out of love for His servant, the Soul of the universe joyfully accepted this simple offering.

Thus one God and two devotees sat together and ate until their hunger was satisfied. Then the Merciful One, the Husband of Lakshmi, spoke to Ramdas, "You have satisfied my hunger. By feeding me in the form of a Brahman, you have gained the merit of serving both God and humanity. Tonight, when you perform kirtana in the temple, I shall come to listen."

Having spoken thus, the Lord quickly returned to His temple. Ramdas was filled with joy and exclaimed that his heart's desire had been fulfilled.

As night fell, Ramdas went to the temple hall and began his kirtana. The citizens gathered and listened with deep love as he sang of the deeds and compassion of the Lord. The Brahmans were astonished by his eloquence and devotion, exclaiming that merely listening to him brought peace to the heart.

The theme of the kirtana was how Narahari protected Prahlada. The singing continued until the third watch of the night and concluded with the waving of lights before the image of Krishna.

As they departed, the townspeople whispered among themselves, hoping to persuade Ramdas to stay another day. But Samartha, knowing their thoughts, rose before dawn and quietly departed. When the people came searching for him in the morning, he was nowhere to be found.

Walking swiftly onward, Ramdas continued his journey. Wherever he halted for the night, he performed kirtana, spreading devotion through song. In this way, passing from town to town, he eventually reached the dense forest of Mahuli.

Scouts brought news to King Shivaji that Ramdas had returned. The king was overjoyed and immediately set out to meet him, carrying with him all the materials required for worship. He reached the very place where he had first met Ramdas.

Seeing the saint from a distance, Shivaji removed his footwear and approached barefoot. He prostrated himself on the ground eleven times. Samartha lovingly lifted him up and embraced him. The king seated Ramdas on a mat and worshipped him with devotion, offering perfumes, rice, flower garlands, incense, lamps, and circumambulation.

After completing the worship, Shivaji rested and said, “Where did you go, leaving me for an entire month?” Ramdas replied, “I went to Pandhari to offer my respects to Panduranga Krishna.” The king then said, “Why did you not take me, a poor sinner, along with you?” Samartha answered gently, “Hurry back home and break your fast. You have lived on fruits alone for a month. Understanding your feelings, I have returned quickly to meet you.”

Receiving this command, the noble king bowed, took leave, and hastened back to Satara. What followed thereafter is now told.

Aurangzeb, the emperor of Delhi, invaded the southern regions with his vast army, conquering many great kings. He took control of the Deccan, causing immense suffering to cows and Brahmans, and destroying many idols. Yet wherever he witnessed genuine miracles, he bowed in reverence, though elsewhere his rule was marked by cruelty and oppression.

At Mahuli, Aurangzeb had recently established a Muhammadan military post. One day, as Samartha wandered through the forest, a remarkable incident occurred. The chief officer of the post had come into the forest to practice archery. Though skilled, his arrows repeatedly missed the target.

Seeing this, Ramdas approached him and said, “What kind of shooting is this? When you release an arrow, you should be able to run after it and catch it in flight.” The officer laughed and said this was impossible. He challenged Ramdas, saying, “I will shoot, and you catch the arrow if you can.”

Ramdas agreed and stood behind him. As soon as the arrow was released, Ramdas leapt forward and seized it in mid-air, returning it instantly. The officer was astonished and thought to himself that this fakir was truly a divine being in human form. He bowed respectfully before Ramdas.

Taking the bow himself, Ramdas shot an arrow at a distant tree. It passed clean through the trunk. The officer’s heart trembled with awe and fear. He thought that this Hindu saint alone could conquer an entire kingdom if he wished. Bowing again, he declared that he saw no one equal to Ramdas in the universe.

Samartha replied calmly, “There is no difference between you and me. God pervades all beings. To Him there is no mine or thine. You say the formless God created only Muhammadans. Is it written in your scripture that Hindus were born from sin? Such belief breeds hatred. By troubling God and Brahmans, your purpose cannot succeed.”

As the officer did not fully understand, Ramdas composed an abhanga in the Muhammadan language. Hearing it, the officer and all his soldiers prostrated themselves before Ramdas.

Standing before him, the officer said, “I will obey any command you give me.” Ramdas replied, “While practicing archery, we have trampled a farmer’s field and caused him distress. Prepare a deed granting this land to him permanently, witnessed by the local authorities.”

The officer immediately agreed and carried out the order. The farmer was filled with joy and gratitude. The officer bowed once more and returned to his post. Ramdas then departed swiftly and arrived at Chaphalakhore.

Ramdas remained at Chaphala for one night and then proceeded to Battisa Shirale. When he entered the town to beg for food, the people were struck with wonder. They said among themselves, “He is young in age, yet he shows

complete indifference to worldly life. His form is beautiful, and there is a divine radiance about him. He appears like an incarnation of God." After bathing, Samartha performed his daily religious duties. Then, bringing Maruti into his contemplation, he worshipped Him with deep love. At night, he began his kirtana. The people of the town gathered to listen, including many distinguished Brahmans, and all listened with rapt attention. The kirtana began with hymns of praise, reminding the listeners of the special form of God to be contemplated. Ramdas spoke from direct spiritual experience. He described those who had attained final deliverance and urged people engaged in worldly life to keep Rama constantly in their thoughts. He taught that one's greatest desire should not be for sons, wife, wealth, or property. Those who dedicate themselves to the welfare of others naturally attain final liberation. Many have sought liberation through paths other than devotion to Rama, but all such attempts have failed, leaving them trapped in repeated births and deaths.

Some claim wisdom yet lack devotion to the worship of God in His manifest form. They deceive others with clever words, but such people never attain their goal. Even Shiva, the chief of yogis, the dweller in cremation grounds, and bearer of the bow Pinaka, became absorbed in the contemplation of Rama. How much more, then, should ordinary people do so? Therefore, devotion to Rama alone is the foundation of all spiritual means. It is the boat that carries one across the ocean of worldly existence and the original source of yogic wisdom. This is the Rama whose noble deeds were sung by Valmiki in countless verses, and hearing them, even Shiva attained peace.

As the people listened to Ramdas' kirtana, they felt a growing detachment from worldly life. Lamps were lit and waved before Rama, the husband of Sita. Shouts of "Victory, victory" arose, accompanied by clapping of hands. Sweet offerings were then distributed to all.

The next day, with great reverence, the townspeople persuaded Ramdas to remain for some time. Some came as humble supplicants, offering their bodies, minds, and wealth. Others, seeking supreme spiritual riches, lost all attachment to worldly life and embraced a pure religious path. Some attached themselves to Ramdas directly, all experiencing deep inner joy.

Some, filled with a spirit of service, retained their household life but became inwardly detached, free from bodily desires. Others, eager to preserve Samartha's teachings, took pleasure in writing down his words, reflecting on their inner meaning, and committing them to memory.

After guiding many toward supreme spiritual wealth, the sadguru again withdrew into the forest, reflecting to himself that a large following only leads to pride. He felt that although it was Rama's command that he give the initiatory mantra to seekers, he personally disliked the reverence paid to him. Yet, he accepted it as the working of destiny. Thus, alone in the forest, he worshipped Rama throughout the night, singing with love of the infinite deeds of the manifest God.

While continuing his forest life, Ramdas came to Shahapura. He entered the town to beg for food, and pious people bowed before him. When Samartha performed kirtana at night, a great crowd assembled to hear him. After listening, they exclaimed in wonder, "Blessed, Blessed." The Brahmans said among themselves, "He should not be called a mere man. He has become an incarnation of the manifest God for the salvation of the world."

The chief town official of Shahapura had a daughter named Akabai. She came before the saint and placed her head at his feet, saying, "O sadguru, I desire to receive from you the supreme spiritual riches." Seeing the sincerity of her heart, Ramdas allowed her to proceed with her offering.

She had brought abundant materials for worship: perfumes, rice, flower garlands, fragrant pastes, bananas, coconuts, and dates. She also prepared garments and ornaments for his worship. Seating the sadguru, she lovingly washed his feet, applied sacred marks to his forehead, anointed him with sandalwood paste, and placed a flower garland around his neck, a sight that filled the eyes with peace.

Incense, lamps, camphor, and lights were waved before him. Ramdas accepted the offering with love. Akabai circumambulated him and offered eleven full prostrations. Fully satisfied with her sincerity, the sadguru gave her the initiatory mantra.

At that moment, King Shivaji arrived and reverently worshipped Ramdas. He arranged a grand feast and fed the Brahmans with rich and fine food. Recognizing the purity of the king's heart, Ramdas stayed for some time at Shahapura. Daily, the sound of kirtanas filled the air, accompanied by cries of "Victory, victory," and the constant chanting of God's names.

Those who approached the sadguru with sincere hearts experienced purification of mind. Their characters transformed, and their hearts became detached from worldly pursuits.

After some days, Samartha once again departed into the forest, followed by many disciples who sought him. Accompanied by his closest followers, he visited nearby villages and forests, wandering freely, inwardly detached, and indifferent to bodily comforts.

One day Ramdas arrived again at Sirapura. As he moved through the town begging for alms, people bowed to him with reverence. Though accompanied by a crowd of disciples, he did not linger even for a moment in any house. Crying out "Victory to Rama," he would move swiftly onward. Yet, through their begging, they obtained enough food to make generous offerings to Brahmans. At night, kirtanas were performed, attended by large gatherings. Listening to Samartha, the people became inwardly detached, and feelings of devotion and renunciation awakened in their hearts, turning them toward higher spiritual riches.

In that town lived a wise and respected clerk who had two sons. The elder, named Raghunath, was intelligent and of excellent character. The younger, Ambaji, had suddenly lost his mental balance and appeared to all as a madman. Because of this, marriage was impossible for him, and his parents lived in constant sorrow. They tried many remedies, but nothing restored his mind.

Hearing the praises of Ramdas sung throughout the town, the parents felt that he must be a manifestation of divine power. They brought Ambaji with them and bowed before the saint, saying that their son had been mad for many days and was useless in household life. They placed Ambaji at Ramdas' feet and declared that they were offering him entirely to the sadguru and would not take him back.

Ramdas listened and replied calmly that the young man was intelligent but had become overpowered by disturbances of the five elements. He said that if one holds firmly to the Name of God, no harmful force can prevail. The people, hearing this, were astonished and asked what he meant by such possession. Ramdas explained that a true saint, through divine power, can dispel such afflictions and restore clarity of mind.

When the parents declared that they knew no saint greater than Ramdas himself, he composed a short poem, glorifying Lord Rama, filled with blessings, addressing the removal of such disturbances. As Ramdas recited these verses, Ambaji repeatedly fell at his feet. His insanity vanished, and his mind became steady. From that moment, he remained in the service of his guru. Overjoyed, the parents returned home, satisfied that their son had been truly offered into divine care.

From that moment, the true marks of devotion, knowledge, and detachment from worldly life blossomed within Ambaji. He constantly repeated the Name of God and lived in perfect obedience to his sadguru.

Always eager in service, Ambaji never failed in his duties. His heart overflowed with joy, and through the grace of Ramdas he became a learned pandit. He gained understanding of Sanskrit and joined enthusiastically in Samartha's daily kirtanas, singing with deep love. He also developed a keen insight into his guru's inner mind.

Ambaji's handwriting was graceful like strings of pearls. Whatever verses Ramdas composed, Ambaji would write them down instantly, as though the words had already been engraved in his memory. He never asked Samartha to repeat a single line. When Ambaji himself performed kirtana, his devotion poured forth through his voice, and Ramdas would gently nod in approval. He became skilled in rhythm, melody, pronunciation, and poetic composition, yet remained humble, free from pride, and continued to beg for food in obedience to his guru.

Along with Ambaji, many devoted disciples stood ready for service. Vasudeva Gosavi, rich in wisdom and experience; Ananta Gosavi, wholly detached from worldly affairs; Moro Gosavi, devoted to service and worship; Uddhava Gosavi, widely known; and Madhava Gosavi, a knower of truth and indifferent to worldly pleasures. Day and night, they served Ramdas with unwavering love. Whatever words fell from Samartha's lips were accepted by all as sacred truth.

Ramdas once said to Akabai, "You should leave me and return home. I wander through forests filled with ravines, thorny thickets, wild animals, and burning heat. You cannot endure such a life even for a moment."

Akabai replied firmly, "I will not live a single moment without you. I have offered my body, mind, and all my possessions to you."

Seeing her determination, Samartha resolved to test her sincerity more deeply. He began to behave playfully, almost childishly, acting as though he had lost all sense. Entering Akabai's house, he mixed oil and ghee together, removed stored food, and smashed grain jars. He gathered all varieties of grain into a single heap. Throughout all this, Akabai laughed joyfully, her mind undisturbed.

When Ramdas saw that even this did not shake her faith, he subjected her to a still greater test. The next morning he said, "You have received supreme spiritual wealth from me. Now call all the Brahmans and distribute to them all your grain, wealth, and possessions."

Hearing these words, Akabai was filled with happiness. She immediately invited the Brahmans, bathed with her clothes on as a sign of renunciation, and brought out her vessels, money, grain, and all household belongings. Placing everything before her guru, she folded her hands and said, "Distribute these yourself. I am your servant in every way."

At Samartha's command, the Brahmans took away the grain and possessions. Even her millstones and mortar were carried off. Akabai rejoiced, saying, "My guru has broken the bonds that tied me to worldly life."

Ramdas then instructed her to go into the town and beg for food, which she did without hesitation.

Just as gold is tested by fire and stone, and a true gem proves its worth only through severe trial, so Samartha tested Akabai with harsh discipline. Her faith remained unshaken. Fully satisfied, Ramdas accepted her sincerity and took her with him into the forest.

Samartha Ramdas departed from Sirapura accompanied by several disciples of noble character. Casting aside all worldly anxieties, they devoted themselves fully to the service of their sadguru. The group ascended a nearby mountain and set up camp beneath trees that offered shade and peace. Some disciples went into the nearby town to beg for food, while others cleaned the area, prepared places for bathing and worship, and arranged everything needed for daily discipline.

Near the camp stood a well filled with clear water. Beside it grew a great banyan tree whose wide branches spread in all directions. One heavy branch stretched directly over the well. A local farmer suggested that Samartha bathe

beneath its cool shade. Ramdas, however, observed that the falling leaves polluted the water and declared that he would bathe there only if the branch were cut.

The disciples hesitated, for the task was dangerous. Whoever climbed the tree risked falling into the deep well. No one dared to reply. When those who had gone begging returned, Samartha repeated his condition. Ambaji, with humility and concern, suggested that the bath be taken first, but Ramdas replied that he had made a vow and would not bathe until it was fulfilled.

Without hesitation, Ambaji went into the town, procured an axe, tied a rope to the branch, and climbed the tree. He warned Samartha that the falling branch might strike him, but Ramdas calmly replied that he was testing Ambaji's skill. Ambaji resolved in his heart that whatever happened to him, his guru must not be harmed. He carefully positioned himself, struck the branch with full force, and succeeded in cutting it away from Samartha. The branch fell safely aside, but Ambaji himself slipped and plunged into the deep well.

The disciples cried out in horror, believing a great calamity had occurred. Yet Samartha remained composed and instructed them to prepare the meal, saying the time for the food offering had arrived. Akabai, distressed, approached him and whispered that Ambaji had fallen into the well. Ramdas replied calmly that Ambaji had gone elsewhere and would eat later, urging her not to grieve.

He then spoke profound words on the impermanence of worldly relationships, explaining that all bonds arise by chance and dissolve by destiny. Parents, spouses, children, and wealth do not truly belong to anyone. Only devotion to Rama is eternal. Hearing this, Akabai obeyed his command, and the disciples bathed, worshipped the guru, and ate.

During this time, King Shivaji arrived and worshipped Samartha. Seeing the fallen branch, he learned the entire story from Akabai. Though concerned, the king trusted in the extraordinary power of the sadguru and returned to Satara. Meanwhile, rumors spread rapidly. Some criticized Ramdas, accusing him of cruelty. Others blamed water deities, fate, or indifference. Divers searched the well but found no body. Confusion and suspicion filled the region.

When Samartha heard of these accusations, he responded with verses, declaring that what one gives is taken back by God, that destiny cannot be escaped, and that all actions bear fruit according to past deeds. After this, he withdrew into another forest with his disciples.

Six days passed. On the seventh day, Ramdas returned to the same place and sat in deep contemplation. Once again, food was gathered and prepared. As the time came to offer the food, Samartha suddenly rose and walked to the well. Calling out loudly, he summoned Ambaji by name. To the amazement of all, a voice answered from within the well. Samartha asked if he was well, and Ambaji replied that he lived by his guru's grace.

At Samartha's command, Ambaji emerged from the well and fell at his feet. The crowd was overwhelmed with joy and awe. Seven days had passed, yet Ambaji stood alive, unharmed, and radiant. The Brahmans declared that even the gods could not fathom the greatness of such a sadguru.

Food was then offered, all were fed, and gifts were distributed. King Shivaji returned to Satara filled with boundless joy, marveling at the miracle he had witnessed. News spread far and wide. Those who had spoken ill of Samartha repented deeply, realizing their grave error. From that day onward, Ambaji was known as Kalyana Gosavi.

After completing those divine acts, Samartha Ramdas said to Ambaji, "Let us proceed to the next town." By this time, Ambaji was lovingly known by all as Kalyana Gosavi.

Samartha then left that place, accompanied by his disciples, continually chanting and worshipping the name of Rama as they journeyed onward. They came and encamped on a mountain near Chaphala. There, raised platforms were

constructed, bringing peace and comfort to all who beheld them. An upper storey was also built for Samartha. Ramdas remained there for a few days, but soon, growing inwardly detached from the place, he moved on to Shahapura.

At Shahapura stood a very ancient and beautiful deity of Maruti. Samartha stayed near this sacred deity and worshipped it daily with great devotion. The pious people of the town gathered every day to listen to his kirtans and to the recitation of the Dasabodha, the great spiritual work of Ramdas. As they listened, their minds became absorbed and uplifted.

Householders and merchants, learned Vedic Brahmans, wise scholars, and devotees of Vishnu following the Bhagavata path assembled in large numbers. Women, Shudras, and people of all other communities also listened with intense devotion. Whenever anyone expressed a doubt, Samartha gently and clearly removed it.

The audience sat around Samartha as he spoke, while he himself appeared as if seated upon a throne. He shone among them like the moon surrounded by stars. Just as Indra among the gods, Shiva among yogis, or Vishnu among his devotees gladdens the eyes, so did Ramdas illuminate that gathering. Kalyana Gosavi read the Dasabodha aloud with deep enthusiasm.

He read passages where Samartha explains the threefold sources of human suffering and their spiritual and physical origins. These teachings awakened firm conviction in the hearts of those who sincerely sought liberation.

Among the listeners was a merchant householder who listened with deep joy. As he heard the teachings, repentance arose within his heart. He stood before Samartha with folded hands and spoke humbly, saying that he had suffered greatly but could not free himself from worldly bondage. Though he desired to renounce everything, his attachments did not leave him. Falling at Ramdas' feet, he begged for guidance.

Standing before Samartha, he pleaded, "I am trapped in worldly existence. Deliver me, O Merciful One. You have descended upon this earth to save mankind. Grant me initiation today and accept me as your disciple."

Samartha replied compassionately, explaining the harsh truths of worldly life. He spoke of parents who exhaust themselves hoping for support in old age, of spouses who show affection only as long as material comforts continue, and of children and relatives who turn indifferent or hostile in times of poverty and decline. He described how sorrow arises whether one has children or not, whether they live or die, whether they are virtuous or worthless. Thus, worldly life, he declared, is the very root of suffering, like a bed of burning coals upon which no one can rest peacefully.

As Samartha spoke, the man's repentance deepened further. With tears, he confessed that his life was filled with sin and that he felt himself drowning in the ocean of worldly existence. He begged to be saved.

Samartha tested his resolve, saying that the man's heart was still entangled in household affairs, while the guru himself wandered through dense forests. How could such a life be suitable for him? The man replied firmly that he would not return home and again fell at Samartha's feet in complete surrender.

After a few days, Samartha set out for the forest. His disciples, along with the repentant man, followed him. There they saw Ramdas seated in silent worship, his eyes closed, singing prayers to Lord Rama of Ayodhya, absorbed in divine love.

The disciples gathered around him and, after offering obeisance, sat by a nearby well. Samartha then questioned the man, asking why he had come into the forest. He explained that one who truly seeks freedom from worldly attachment must obey the guru completely. A mind divided between worldly pleasures and supreme spiritual wealth cannot attain true knowledge.

The man replied with faith that in the guru's company all illusions of maya would disappear. Hearing this, Samartha replied through abhangas, testing the purity of the man's resolve. Hearing these words, the man's mind finally became peaceful.

He then declared, "O my lord and sadguru, whatever command you give me, I shall obey without hesitation. I will never act against your will." Samartha silently accepted his resolve, and together with his disciples, he moved onward into an even deeper forest.

As Samartha Ramdas and his disciples moved deeper into the forest, they came upon a well overflowing with clear water, surrounded by dense trees. The long branches of a great tree stretched out over the well, casting deep shade. Samartha seated himself there and suddenly commanded a Brahman who had recently joined him, "Climb that tree at once."

Obedient to his sadguru, the Brahman immediately began to climb. When he reached higher, Ramdas said, "Now come out over the well." At these words, fear seized him. Trembling, he cried out that he would fall, yet driven by obedience, he continued until he reached the topmost branch.

Samartha then tested him further. "Just as a teacher makes a boy hang by clasped hands, seize the branch in that manner." The Brahman locked his fingers over the branch, released his feet, and hung suspended over the deep water. Samartha said calmly, "Now swing back and forth, as you do in worldly life."

Terrified, the Brahman cried that he would surely fall. Looking down into the depth, he felt dizzy. While he hung thus between life and death, Samartha asked him, "Is it the branch that is holding you, or are you holding the branch?"

The Brahman replied, "Out of fear for my life, I am holding on myself. I am like a silkworm trapped in its own cocoon." Samartha said, "Your heart is your own enemy. You have entangled yourself in worldly life just as you cling to this branch. If the branch were holding you, you could blame the world or your family. But you are gripping it with both hands. Let go at once."

Hearing this command, the Brahman nearly fainted. Samartha continued firmly, "If you seek your own good, let go both hands." The Brahman trembled violently, his mind torn between fear and faith.

Then Samartha explained through examples. He spoke of the parrot that clings to a twig in fear, forgetting it has wings and could fly away, and thus falls into the hunter's trap. He spoke of the monkey that fills its fist with grain and cannot withdraw it, becoming captive because it refuses to let go. "In the same way," Samartha said, "even good men bind themselves through attachment. You alone are responsible for your bondage. Now let go. Lord Rama will protect you. He will not abandon one who seeks liberation."

Summoning all his courage, the Brahman released both hands and sank into the well. Seeing this, the disciples cried out in alarm, fearing that another tragedy like Kalyana's had occurred. Word spread quickly that a Brahman had drowned.

Meanwhile, Samartha sat calmly on his mat, absorbed in contemplation of Lord Rama, his heart filled with joy.

As the Brahman sank beneath the water, an extraordinary vision unfolded before him. He beheld a radiant city surrounded by wish-fulfilling trees. There stood a beautiful hermitage of Samartha, adorned with flowers and sacred tulasi plants. Peace filled his soul. Around the hermitage were rest halls where devotees sat listening as Kalyana Gosavi explained the Dasabodha.

At the center, upon a magnificent throne, sat Samartha himself, just as radiant as ever. Hearing the teachings on the threefold sufferings, the Brahman felt intense repentance and cried out for mercy. He worshipped Ramdas, prostrated himself repeatedly, and received initiation into discipleship along with the sacred mantra.

At that very moment, Samartha, seated by the well in the forest, called out, “Come up at once.” Hearing this command, the Brahman instantly emerged from the water and fell at Ramdas’ feet in gratitude.

Samartha then asked him to recount what he had experienced so that all doubts might be removed. The Brahman described the vision in detail, saying that Samartha had initiated him, that Kalyana Gosavi was expounding the Dasabodha, and that he had seen all the disciples present even while under the water.

Awe filled the assembly. Samartha’s body seemed to glow with divine radiance. All bowed before him, confessing that they could not comprehend the limits of his power. Though God performs divine acts, the deeds of saints appear even greater, for through such miracles they turn humanity toward the worship of God.

In that dark age, when dharma had declined, justice and truth had weakened, and sacred places had lost their former glory, God had commanded His servants to descend to the world. Samartha Ramdas was indeed that divine instrument, an incarnation of Maruti, restoring faith and devotion through his life and deeds.

After the earlier events involving Kalyana and the Brahman who was tested in the well to loosen his bonds of worldly attachment, Samartha Ramdas rose from his seat and proceeded toward the Chaphala valley. His disciples followed him for a short distance and then went into the nearby town to beg for alms.

At that time, King Shivaji was restless in mind. Wondering where Samartha might have gone, he immediately sent scouts into every forest, great and small. After searching widely, they reached the Chaphala valley, where they suddenly learned that the Swami was nearby. Delighted, they hurried back to Satara and informed the king.

Filled with joy, Shivaji prepared his bodyguard and set out at once. Riding swiftly, he soon outpaced his ministers and attendants. During the early hours of dawn, he covered the long distance of nearly twenty-eight miles. Along the way, a farmer informed him that Ramdas had climbed the mountain. The king was now suffering intensely from thirst, and no water was to be seen anywhere.

He entrusted his horse to the farmer and began climbing the mountain on foot. Along the path he encountered tigers, wolves, and bears, yet fear did not touch him, for he trusted completely in Samartha’s protection. Reaching the summit, he beheld his sadguru. According to his custom, he fell flat on the ground in prostration. His face was pale, and his body weakened by thirst.

Samartha spoke gently, “Why have you come so far? Have I not often told you that merely remembering me is enough?”

The king replied with humility, “Your command is my law. My mind is always fixed on your feet, yet a devotee longs for the direct sight of his sadguru, for it brings peace to the eyes and rest to the heart.”

The king then signaled to Akabai, a devoted disciple, asking if she had any drinking water. She replied sorrowfully that there was not a single drop on the mountain and that the other disciples had gone out to beg for food. The king sat silently, suffering greatly from thirst.

Soon the disciples returned and placed their begging bags before Ramdas. Akabai said to them, “The king is tormented by thirst. Go at once and bring water.”

Hearing this, Samartha said, “It will take too long to descend the mountain.” Then, performing a miracle, he struck the mountainside with his staff. At once a clear stream of water burst forth, flowing steadily like water issuing from a stone spout carved in the shape of a cow’s head.

The water was cool, sweet, and refreshing. All drank with joy, declaring that by praising this water they had honored all sacred waters of the three worlds. There had been no water on the mountain before; Samartha brought it forth by his will alone. That stream continues to flow even today and may still be seen by devotees of the sadguru.

Just as Bhagiratha brought down the Ganges to save the world, and just as Krishna revealed the Bhagavad Gita for the liberation of seekers, so Ramdas revealed this sacred water to relieve the king’s suffering. Its purity still cleanses and uplifts humble souls.

All bathed in the water, cooked their food, and ate. Ramdas then gave the king permission to depart, and Shivaji returned to his residence at Satara. Samartha remained in the forest, while his disciples continued their daily rounds for alms.

After some days, Samartha moved on to another forest. Akabai served him day and night, cooking whatever food he desired. She prepared large quantities of milk macaroni so that whenever Samartha felt hunger, food would be ready at once.

On one occasion, Samartha expressed displeasure with the dish and began a deliberate test of her devotion. It was the month of Shravan, and the sky was dark with relentless rain. Amid torrential downpours, Samartha climbed to the mountain top and declared that he was hungry.

Four disciples held an awning over him while a fire was kindled with great difficulty from wet wood. Akabai managed to cook the dish, added sugar, and humbly requested him to eat. Joining her palms, she stood before him in reverence. Samartha replied calmly, “I am no longer hungry,” and walked away toward another forest.

The next day, despite heavy rain, Samartha asked her to prepare wheat cakes fried in ghee. Once again, the disciples struggled to light a fire. Akabai prepared the food with devotion and begged him to partake. Falling at his feet, she pleaded silently. Samartha said, “It is now evening. You took too long. I am not hungry. Give it to anyone you like.”

Akabai obeyed without distress. Her mind remained steady, her devotion unshaken. Her heart was fixed solely on her sadguru’s feet. Though Samartha sought to test her endurance, there was no confusion or resentment within her. She felt only joy in serving him and said firmly, “Let happen what may. I seek no other means of salvation. If Samartha does not eat, I too will remain fasting.”

The next day, Samartha entered yet another forest. In a dense thicket dwelt a great striped tiger. Seeing it, Samartha commanded, “I wish to spend the night here. Go to another forest and leave this place to us.”

At once the tiger rose and departed. Ramdas spent the night peacefully in the thicket. Before sunrise the next morning, he set out again with his disciples toward another forest.

One day Samartha Ramdas said to his disciple Kalyana, “Make a pebble-shooting bow with your own hands and bring it to me.” Kalyana at once split a piece of bamboo, carefully smoothed it with his knife, shaped it into a sling, and presented it to his swami. Samartha accepted it and wandered through the forest, playfully carrying the pebble bow in his hand.

At that time King Shivaji came to meet Ramdas, bringing with him the materials for worship. The king reverently worshipped the Giver of final deliverance while Samartha was playing with the sling. After offering his salutations, Shivaji took leave and returned to his residence.

Meanwhile, a group of matted-hair ascetics gathered before the king and spoke in complaint. They said, "Your father was our protector. It was by the grace of Shiva that this kingdom came to you. Yet you no longer give us the honor that is due. Ramdas is merely a wandering ascetic in the forest. He gave you a mantra, and because of this you neglect your royal duties and constantly follow him. He is not even in his right mind. Can such a man protect you? By associating with him, you have abandoned us and ceased to honor the learned pandits who uphold the Vedas and the Shastras."

Their words were meant to weaken the king's devotion toward Ramdas. Shivaji, however, gave no reply and remained silent.

The ascetics then sent one of their number into the forest, instructing him to observe Ramdas closely. "If you see any fault in him," they said, "return and inform us." The yogi agreed and departed.

Just as a fly is drawn again and again to a wound, so a crooked mind searches endlessly for faults in a saint. Samartha, who could discern the thoughts of others, understood the man's intention. Yet he reflected, "Even when correcting the wicked, one should act with courtesy. I will let him witness a miracle."

With this resolve, Samartha began to amuse himself in the forest, shooting pebbles at birds with the sling. The yogi sat at a distance watching intently. Whenever a pebble struck, a bird fell lifeless to the ground. Seeing this, the yogi rushed back to the ascetics and reported what he had seen.

Nearly two hundred yogis gathered in consultation and decided to inform the king in private that Ramdas was killing birds in the forest. Rising together, they went before Shivaji and said, "O King, show us your forest-dwelling guru." The king, already prepared to go, invited them to accompany him.

Together they entered the forest with soldiers, ministers, and yogis. There they saw Samartha with the pebble bow in his hand, striking birds with flawless aim. Each bird fell dead to the ground. Samartha then instructed his disciples, "Fill your begging bags with these birds." They obeyed without hesitation.

As this was happening, the king approached and prostrated himself before Ramdas. The yogis protested loudly, saying, "Why do you bow before one who kills living beings? You teach wisdom to others, yet you yourself destroy life and deceive the pious."

Samartha replied calmly, "He who kills and restores life is Rama alone. In your ignorance you blame me without understanding. The dark-hued Lord Vishnu brought forth Brahma as His own child. Creation, preservation, and destruction are all governed by His power. The Infinite One holds the strings that move destiny. Not knowing Him, why do you blame the instrument?"

The yogis replied, "But before our very eyes you have killed these birds with your sling. The guilt rests upon you."

Samartha responded, "If I have killed them, then you restore them to life. Perform this miracle before the king, and he will worship you."

The yogis exclaimed, "You are foolish. Once life has departed, not even Brahma or the gods can revive a corpse. What power do we possess?"

Samartha listened to their harsh words and then recited an abhanga glorifying Lord Rama, filled with spiritual meaning. After this, he continued striking down more birds. Turning to the king, he said, "Collect the birds as they fall." At his

command, the king himself gathered the lifeless birds. The yogis whispered among themselves, “The king has become degraded.”

The dead birds were piled together before Samartha. He then said, “Now gather firewood and prepare to roast them.” The disciples and the king collected sticks, placed the birds beneath them, and lit a fire.

As soon as the flames began to rise, all the birds suddenly sprang to life and flew into the sky. Looking upward, everyone cried out in amazement, “Blessed is the greatness of the saints!” Samartha extinguished the fire and searched among the sticks, but not a single bird remained.

Thus all those who had reviled him were put to shame. The devotees clapped their hands and shouted, “Victory! Victory!” while the faces of the slanderers darkened with embarrassment. The yogis departed silently to their homes, and the king lovingly worshipped Ramdas, the Giver of Deliverance.

After receiving permission to leave, Shivaji returned to his city. As Ramdas moved on to his dwelling place, a great multitude followed him, drawn by the glory of the Savior of the lowly.

The names of those disciples who remained with Samartha Ramdas in the forest. Merely hearing their names loosens the bonds of worldly existence.

There was Vasudeva Gosavi, formerly a householder of Kanheri, and Uddhava of Takali, renowned throughout the land. Girimaji of Bhoinja, once a cowherd from the Balaghat region, also joined him. Krishnaji and Haragaji, both citizens of Pandharpur, served at his feet. Shivarama Gosavi and the great poet Kalyana, both from the Konkan region, were among his closest companions, and the story of Kalyana is already well known to the devout.

Sirgava, a town near Pali, was the home of Dattoba Gosavi, also known as Ananta of Tarala. Ananda Gosavi and Mauni came from Nilanga. Raghunatha of Adasule, whose guru was Bhima, was filled with reverent devotion. Madhava Gosavi of Parnera excelled in both devotion and knowledge. Milaji of Mudalakore served constantly without weariness. Bholarama and Balakarama, from the Varada region, renounced worldly desires and clung firmly to the holy company of Ramdas. Shivarama Gosavi of Parande and Dinkara of Tisagava were also among his followers.

Besides these, there were countless others who remained in their own homes yet lived inwardly devoted. Akabai of Shahapura and Venubai of Kolhapur cast aside all sense of shame and surrendered fully to the feet of their sadguru. Ambikabai came from the Junnar region, and Anubai of Kanhera constantly meditated on her guru’s feet.

All these disciples stayed continually with Samartha. They went out to beg for alms and returned with abundance, never regarding this as a burden. Crying “Victory to Rama,” they moved swiftly through the streets. Pious householders followed them gladly and gave what they could. Some offered grain or rice, some flour or lentils, others leafy vegetables placed humbly into the begging bags. Merchants gave turmeric, ginger, and cumin seed. Nothing was lacking, for all spiritual powers seemed to serve Ramdas as obedient attendants.

Begging, in truth, is like a wish-fulfilling cow. The saints established it for those seeking final deliverance. Yet its fruit comes only to those who beg without shame. If one becomes a servant of Hari for worldly gain and feels ashamed of begging, it is clear that the net of worldly attachment has not been broken, and his renunciation is only an outward display. Whatever is freely given should be accepted with gratitude. If the seeker asks for more, he becomes blameworthy. Such were the rules of begging laid down by Samartha. The disciples brought back their filled bags and placed them before their master. Four women accompanied Ramdas, ensuring that the cooking was well done, and many Brahmans regularly dined with him in forest gatherings.

On one occasion Samartha sat upon his mat, absorbed in contemplation of Rama, worshipping him with deep love. A man approached and bowed before him, saying, "Kolhapur is a sacred city, known for purity and holy deeds. The goddess Mahalakshmi resides there, and all worship her. Kirtans and recitations in praise of Rama are not pleasing to the people. If someone repeats aloud 'Rama, Rama,' they object, saying, 'These are inauspicious words, to be uttered only at the time of death.' In this way, they frighten even the pious."

Hearing this, Ramdas laughed gently and said, "This age of Kali is difficult to restrain. It deceives even the wise. If we speak of Rama as Brahma, then the goddess is but the shadow of Brahma. She has enchanted the three worlds and brought them under her sway. Those who worship Rama are absorbed into Brahma at once. Therefore, this enchantress of the universe confuses the minds of men.

"When a person commits improper acts, his own mind may not be disturbed. But when his father hears of it, he strikes him to correct him. Thieves and adulterers accomplish their deeds in the darkness of night, but at the rise of the sun they flee in fear. In the same way, steadfast devotion to Rama is difficult to maintain."

On this subject Ramdas composed an abhanga, filled with profound meaning. While Samartha recited it, Kalyana Gosavi carefully wrote it down.

When Ramdas heard of the happenings at Kolhapur, and learned that the sacred name of Rama was not even permitted to be spoken aloud within the temple of Mahalakshmi, he was filled with astonishment. Reflecting deeply, Samartha said to himself, "Rama has commanded me to preach to mankind and to guide them onto the path of His worship. I must therefore go to the region of Karhad and help people attain the supreme spiritual riches. By listening to my kirtans, their conduct will surely change."

He reflected further, "I am a servant of Rama and am free from rebirth and re-death. Yet, for the complete salvation of the world, I have assumed this visible form." Having thus resolved, Samartha set out toward the Karhad district. His entire band of disciples followed him, lodging wherever the swami chose to stay.

Free from all personal desires, they went from house to house begging for food. When night fell, enthusiastic kirtans were held, and people gathered in large numbers, listening with reverence. As they listened to Samartha's kirtans, their hearts softened and were filled with repentance. Whoever approached him with sincere intent received the initiatory mantra and was accepted as his disciple.

If it was one's good fortune to receive the touch of Samartha's lotus hand upon the head, indifference to worldly attachments arose naturally within. Such a person became a noble Vaishnava and a true bhakta. Love for the worship of Rama awakened, and the seeker became freed from the six inner enemies of the soul. Thus, with great joy, Ramdas brought spiritual salvation to the world.

Many women and shudras, men and women alike, were guided onto the path of bhakti through his grace. When he arrived at Karhad, he performed powerful and uplifting kirtans. Hearing the name of Ramdas, the Brahmans of the region came to listen, and as they heard his eloquent and inspired speech, their minds were completely overwhelmed.

The Deshpande of Karhad was a man held in great respect. His only daughter, Venubai, was a widow, and she listened with deep earnestness to the kirtans of Samartha Ramdas. Through that sacred listening, her heart was filled with repentance, and she reflected within herself, "I must act in such a way that my soul may attain final liberation."

With this resolve, Venubai approached Samartha and bowed before him with complete sincerity. She said, "I have come to you as a supplicant, offering my body, mind, and wealth. O Merciful One, grant me the initiatory mantra and accept me as your disciple."

The Sadguru, knowing her inner fitness through his divine insight, replied gently, “Make the necessary preparations.” Hearing this, Venubai was filled with immense joy.

She arranged a grand feast for the Brahmans, preparing many kinds of pure and delicious food. With loving devotion she also prepared everything required for the worship of the Sadguru. She decorated the upper storey for the ceremony, drew sacred designs with colored powders, spread mats on the floor, polished the brass lamps, and placed them in a radiant circle.

Fragrant oil was applied, and Ramdas was bathed with warm water and gently dried. Kalyana Gosavi dressed him in a beautiful yellow robe. Sacred marks were drawn upon his forehead, sandalwood paste was applied, and a garland of fresh flowers was placed around his neck, bringing peace to all who beheld him.

Venubai waved incense and lamps, offered perfumes, placed gifts before him, and prostrated herself fully on the ground. Samartha then called her near and softly whispered the sacred mantra into her ear. As those divine words entered her heart, she experienced profound inner peace.

Meanwhile, the Brahman feast was arranged. The Brahmans bathed, returned, and were respectfully worshipped. The water that washed their feet was reverently sipped, and they were lovingly served. When all had gathered to behold the Sadguru, each perceived him according to their own nature: to some he appeared as Maruti himself, to others as pure wisdom incarnate, and to some as a mad ascetic. Each vision bore fruit according to the beholder’s attitude.

Samartha instructed Kalyana that no one should approach him, and asked Venubai to go down and personally offer the food to the deities. He then sat alone, meditating deeply on Maruti. At that very moment, Maruti appeared in visible form and lovingly partook of the offering.

Venubai returned with another dish to serve Ramdas and beheld Maruti eating with him. Struck with awe and fear at the divine vision, she fainted and began to fall from the upper storey. With extraordinary swiftness, Ramdas grasped her wrist mid-air and lifted her back safely. The Brahmans who witnessed this were filled with amazement and fear.

When Venubai regained consciousness, Ramdas asked her gently, “Mother, what did you see?” Holding his feet, she replied, “I saw a radiant being formed of pure light, clothed in golden garments, with a tail behind him. The sight overwhelmed me, and I fainted.”

Samartha said, “Many follow me, but none have been granted a vision of Maruti. Your merit is indeed extraordinary.”

The feast then concluded. The Brahmans departed, satisfied and honored. Ramdas served more food, which Maruti ate with delight, drinking water afterward with pleasure. When Venubai offered betel to Samartha, Maruti vanished from sight. Ramdas then ate what remained on Maruti’s plate as sacred prasadam.

That night, all his followers, including women and shudras, were fed. Later, Venubai brought a light meal, saying, “All the noon offerings were consumed by Maruti. Please accept this.” Samartha agreed.

Preparations were then made for the kirtan. Lamps burned brightly, mats were spread, and people gathered from all directions. Ramdas began the kirtan, his disciples standing behind him. He sang an abhanga proclaiming the supreme glory of the Holy Name of Rama: “The Holy Name of Rama alone accomplishes what all other means cannot, Mantras, austerities, and rites may be practiced, but at the end of life only the Holy Name of Rama saves, No other means can deliver the soul at the final moment, Countless great sinners have been redeemed by the Holy Name, The Holy Name is the essence of all essences and the refuge of all beings and says Ramdas, “How often must I tell you—there is no other path than the Holy Name of Rama.”

Thus the Merciful-to-the-lowly firmly established the path of bhakti. By glorifying the Holy Name, he humbled the evil-minded and uplifted the devoted. He taught that true knowledge is joined with detachment from worldly things, and his stories of the personal, loving form of God melted every heart.

Cymbals rang, drums resounded sweetly, hands clapped, fingers snapped, and the noble Vaishnavas danced in joy. The Name of Rama filled all space. The kirtan continued through the four watches of the night, ending with the final offering to Rama, the Husband of Janaki.

The foremost Brahmans requested Ramdas to remain for a few days more, and to satisfy their longing he agreed. Many other devotees received the Names of God from him and began their spiritual journey. Samartha remained there for three days, performing kirtans overflowing with divine love. On the fourth day, without informing anyone, he quietly departed for his forest retreat.

At dawn, when Ramdas had departed, his disciples went searching for him. Venubai was deeply disturbed by his absence and felt intense anxiety. She asked her mother for permission to go and see her Guru, but her mother harshly forbade her, calling it disgraceful for a young widow to wander into the forest. Torn within, Venubai feared that separation from Samartha would entangle her again in household bondage.

When she saw a group of Ramdas' disciples setting out to worship their Guru, she resolved to follow them. Upon meeting Samartha in the forest, she humbly bowed and begged to accompany him. Samartha gently but firmly advised her to return home. He warned that society would mock her and confuse her mind, and taught her that true renunciation meant dying to worldly attachments inwardly. He instructed her to worship Rama at home, assuring her that divine grace would eventually loosen all bonds. With compassion, he sent her back.

Venubai obeyed. She lived quietly at home, singing Samartha's abhangas, worshipping her Guru inwardly, and keeping Rama constantly in her heart. When she later heard that Samartha had come to Shahapur, she visited him briefly, attended a kirtana, and then returned home with his permission.

However, her father-in-law, hearing of her devotion, accused her parents of allowing improper behavior and warned them of social disgrace. Pressured by fear of scandal, her parents tried to restrain her, but Venubai remained firm. She declared that since her husband was dead, her life now belonged entirely to her Sadguru. Rama was her father and Sita her mother, and devotion was her only path.

Fearing dishonor, her parents committed a terrible act and poisoned her. As the poison burned her body, Venubai cried out to her Guru and to Rama, calling Ramdas the living form of Maruti and her sole protector. She soon lost consciousness, and people gathered around her lifeless body, wondering at her sudden death. Her parents wept outwardly but were consumed with guilt.

Through his inner vision, Ramdas perceived the event. He prayed fervently to Lord Rama, recalling the power of the divine Name that even neutralized poison. Passing a staff over Venubai's body, he invoked that grace. Immediately, she vomited the poison and revived.

Venubai rose, bowed at her Guru's feet, and revealed that her parents had poisoned her. Grateful beyond words, she declared that Samartha had destroyed the net of illusion binding her. From that moment, she followed him without hesitation. Samartha walked ahead, and Venubai followed behind, as they proceeded together toward the valley of Chaphala.

When Venubai reached the valley of Chaphala and saw the assembled Guru and fellow disciples, her happiness knew no bounds. By Samartha's grace, she attained spiritual understanding and began to sing kirtanas and recite devotional verses that delighted the wise.

At dawn, the disciples went out to beg for alms, while Akabai swept, cleaned, and prepared the food. At that time, King Shivaji unexpectedly arrived to see and worship Ramdas. He brought baskets filled with fine mangoes.

Meanwhile, the disciples returned with abundant provisions. After bathing and completing their devotions, the meal was prepared and served. Each person received mangoes that yielded generous cups of juice, and all were fully satisfied. At Samartha's request, the king also dined, and panasupari (betel-nuts) was distributed.

Samartha then ordered the performance of a sacred rajayoga rite. A raised square platform was prepared and decorated with flowers. At its center stood a Tulsi altar bearing the banner of Maruti. Upon this platform, a beautiful throne was placed, and Samartha seated himself upon it. The king's eight ministers stood before him with folded hands. Ramdas was clothed in garments woven with gold and silver threads and adorned with jeweled ornaments, which King Shivaji himself reverently placed upon him. Attendants stood nearby as staff bearers, eyes fixed upon the Guru's feet, announcing each new visitor who approached. Along with his disciples, Ramadas performed sacred rajayoga rite.

During this time, it was by the command of Shri Rama that Ramdas began composing the Dasabodha, the instructions to disciple. As the Svami spoke the blessed words, his disciple Kalyana wrote them down. Ramdas recited the verses as if repeating them from memory, and Kalyana recorded them instantly, never needing a repetition. Samartha worked diligently from early morning, and by sunrise, the book was complete.

When Kalyana arose to offer his namaskara to the sun, he suddenly found that he could see nothing. Distressed, he placed his head at Samartha's feet and said, "Samartha, I cannot see." Samartha, understanding that Kalyana's eyes were strained from eight watches of continuous writing, passed his hand over them, restoring his divine vision. All the disciples were amazed, and Kalyana was filled with joy. At that very moment, King Shivaji also regained full consciousness.

Ramdas had written seven chapters of the Dasabodha on the duties of a king and presented them to Shivaji, who read them with peace and clarity of mind. Just as Krishna composed the Bhagavad Gita to remove Arjuna's hesitation in the battlefield, Ramdas composed the Dasabodha to guide Shivaji, who, moved by the teaching, had even considered renouncing his kingship. Those who listened to its wisdom, committed it to memory, and practiced its guidance were and will continue to be saved. In this way, the king attained the same serene and impartial state of mind as King Janaka.

With the composition complete, Samartha commenced the grand rajayoga ceremony. The king attended daily, offering worship according to traditional rituals. Ramdas' disciples had grown numerous, each devotedly serving their Guru. Some acted as ministers, standing with folded hands before him; some held fans or whisk brushes; some guarded his presence; and others sang his praises. Every disciple watched attentively for Samartha's commands, ready to serve him at all times. Even the king's eight ministers participated in this devoted service. Samartha was pleased to witness the earnest devotion of his disciples in performing the rajayoga.

Daily, Brahmans, including the king and his ministers, were feasted with dainty food. In the third watch of the night, Kalyana read the Puranas in a kirtana in praise of Hari, moving all hearts with devotion. This spiritual observance continued for twelve years, after which Samartha retired to the forest, granting the king leave to depart.

Before leaving, King Shivaji had copies made of Ramdas' works, including the Gurugita, Panchikarana, Manache Shloka, and the Ramayana in verse. The king preserved the Dasabodha in his private library, reading it constantly and cherishing the wisdom of his Guru in solitude.

Among King Shivaji's learned advisors was a distinguished Brahman named Gaga Pandita. Master of the four Vedas, an expert in the Bhagavata, and renowned for his wisdom, he had resided in the sacred city of Benares and excelled in all fields of learning. Appointed by the king to listen to the reading of the Bhagavata Purana, he was esteemed for his knowledge and honoured with the title of Rajamanya.

However, when Gaga Pandita heard the praises of Ramdas and saw that the king had become his disciple, serving him with unwavering devotion, jealousy stirred in his heart. His pride and envy, like the waning of the moon or the spoiling of salt in the sea, clouded his intellect. Though he possessed vast learning, his hatred of the devotees of Vishnu threatened to undo his own merit, as Durvasa had once experienced in his ill-treatment of Ambarisha.

One day, after bathing, King Shivaji sat in the Puja Room and unwrapped the Dasabodha to read it with delight. At that moment, Gaga Pandita arrived. The king welcomed him and offered a seat. The Pandita inquired, "What scripture is this? Is it in Sanskrit or Marathi?" The king replied that it was the Dasabodha, composed by Samartha Ramdas.

Filled with contempt, Gaga Pandita exclaimed that listening to a work in Marathi was a great sin. "If you wish," he said, "I will read the works of Vyasa, but you should discard all Marathi books. They are for women, Shudras, and others, not for Brahmans and Kshatriyas, who should study the Puranas composed by Dvaipayana." The king, however, replied with calm firmness, "This book is in harmony with the Vedas and Shastras. I have grown to love it and wish for you to examine it fully."

Infuriated, Gaga Pandita declared he would no longer read the Purana to the king and returned home. Yet, the king remained unmoved in his devotion to Ramdas.

Hearing of this, Samartha came to the city with all his disciples and encamped in a park. The king, indifferent to worldly matters, hurried barefoot to meet him, followed by his ministers, citizens, Vedic scholars, merchants, and a procession of elephants, horses, and palanquins. Despite the throng, the king commanded that Gaga Pandita be summoned. The Pandita, however, delayed, claiming he could only meet Samartha during the kirtana.

At the appointed time, the kirtana began. Venubai led the singing under Samartha's command, followed by Akabai and Kalyana Gosavi, each stirring waves of devotion in the assembly. Some Brahmans murmured in envy, but the pious listened with heartfelt joy.

Finally, Samartha himself entered. The assembly rose to greet him with reverence, except for the proud Gaga Pandita, who sat haughtily, inflated with his own learning. Observing this, Samartha stood in the center of the circle and invoked the Lord of Ayodhya, the Husband of Sita, the son of Dasharatha, Shri Rama: "Victory, Victory to the Dweller in Ayodhya, the slayer of Ravana, the Saguna and Nirguna! Shri Rama is my divine knowledge, my indifference to worldly affairs, my family guru, my saviour across the ocean of worldly existence, my speaker on philosophy, and my bestower of blessed poetry. I have no one but Him."

As Samartha concluded, the assembly clapped, chanted the names of Rama, and cried aloud, "Victory! Victory!" The devotional enthusiasm reached a peak beyond words. Ramdas extolled the power of Rama's holy name according to the teachings of the Vedas and Shastras, quoting from the Bhagavata and explaining its sacred meaning to all present.

As the kirtana progressed, Gaga Pandita listened intently, and a thought arose within him: "Samartha is no ordinary human. As I behold his features, I see the Maruti (Hanuman) Himself." Overcome with this realization, he abandoned all pride—pride in his learning, his deeds, and his philosophical knowledge. With a heart full of repentance, he prostrated himself on the ground before Ramdas.

Samartha raised him gently, embracing him with both arms. Gaga Pandita spoke with devotion: "You are indeed the avatara of Maruti. You appear on earth in visible form to save the world, yet in truth, you are Maruti Himself. My mind is fully convinced of this."

Taking his hand, Samartha seated the Pandita before him, a sight that filled the king with joy. Even the gods delighted in this assembly, arriving in their radiant chariots to listen with love to the divine stories of Hari. Sacred rivers, holy bathing places, and all festal occasions were imagined as present, blessing the scene with their presence.

Turning to his devotees, Ramdas spoke: “All the illusory things you see will ultimately perish. Only Rama is eternal. Worship Him alone.” He then recited verses on Creation, Existence, and Destruction, interweaving inspired abhangas, guiding his listeners in devotion, conduct, and experiential knowledge. He elucidated the doctrines of Vedanta and Siddhanta, leaving the assembled Panditas astonished and speechless.

Addressing the lingering prejudice against the Marathi language, Samartha explained: “Whether in Marathi or Sanskrit, the meaning is the same. Reading the Puranas in Sanskrit still requires explanation in Marathi. Just as a king’s glory is magnified through his subjects, so too is the essence of scripture revealed through understanding. God created fifty-six languages, yet the names of Rama and Krishna remain unchanged. The great poets Vyasa and Valmiki bear witness to this truth.”

He further reminded them that Marathi, like all languages, is self-evolved, and that dismissing it undermines the accessibility of divine wisdom. Hearing this, the Panditas laughed, their pride softened, and the assembly echoed with shouts of “Victory! Victory!” The king, immersed in loving contemplation, felt a deep peace.

As the kirtana drew to a close, the final hymn of praise was sung, and offerings were made to the Husband of Janaki, Shri Rama. Suddenly, Samartha vanished from sight, leaving Kalyana to complete the hymns of praise. When the throne was observed again, the sadguru was seated as if never gone, astonishing all. By Samartha’s command, sweetmeats were distributed among the assembly, and the people returned home with hearts full of devotion, while the king departed in delight and contentment.

Samartha had a multitude of disciples, many already renowned for their wisdom and devotion. Among those who newly embraced his guidance were Ramaji Gosavi, a man wholly indifferent to worldly affairs, whose religious residence was near Pali. He renounced all possessions and dedicated himself entirely to worship. Musal Gosavi, similarly detached from worldly life, lived on the banks of the Krishna River. Meru Gosavi, hailing from Karnataka, became a devoted follower to serve the Svami.

Rudraji Gosavi of Shahapura, Devadaea of Dadegava, and Divakara Gosavi of Parali—who acted as Samartha’s family priest—joined in steadfast service. Bhanaji Gosavi of Chaphala and Jasvanta Gosavi were ever-present in their devotion, attending to every need of their Guru. Through Samartha’s grace, even the prideful Gaga Pandita was humbled, demonstrating that while the pride of ignorance can vanish instantly, even the pride of knowledge can be dissolved by the touch of divine wisdom.

Once without informing anyone, Samartha departed from Satara. He arrived at Bhuinja, spending the night there, and then journeyed to Alandi. There he bathed in the sacred waters of the Indrayani River and paid homage at the tomb of Saint Dnyaneshvara. He fed the Brahmans and stood in the assembly hall, performing a kirtana that lasted two watches of the day. After three nights at Alandi, he continued on to the banks of the Godavari, greeted by enthusiastic crowds at every village he passed. Town officials welcomed him, offering provisions for his meals, and at night the people delighted in listening to his kirtanas.

Finally, with great joy, Samartha arrived at the sacred city of Pratishthana (Paithana). After bathing in the Godavari, he encamped for the night with all his followers. The next day, they went into the city to beg for food. Samartha visited the house of Ekanatha and worshipped the shrine there, while his disciples returned with their begging bags full. The meal was cooked and shared with many Brahmans, all partaking to their satisfaction.

As evening fell, Samartha proceeded to worship at the altar dedicated to Ekanatha. He also revered the Ashvattha tree, considered divine in that sacred place. Standing before the padukas (foot impressions on stone) of Ekanatha, he performed a kirtana, which was received with great joy by all the Brahmans of the city. Ramdas remained in Pratishthana for three nights under these auspicious conditions.

As he prepared to leave, he experienced a profound moment of divine grace, meeting Shri Ekanatha himself. At sunrise, Ramdas and his followers bathed and resumed their journey, arriving at Aurangabad, where they immediately went out to beg for food, continuing their path of devotion and service.

During his travels, Samartha arrived at Aurangabad, where he encountered the elder brother of Ramdas, named Rami Ramdas, who had also come to the city. Rami Ramdas stayed there for a few days before returning to Jamba.

Among those present was a devoted follower from Shahapura, who, upon seeing Samartha begging for food, was overwhelmed with joy. He prostrated himself before the Svami and, with great devotion, took Samartha and all his companions to his home. There he worshipped them according to custom and served them a meal, honoring the holy presence.

At this gathering, Samartha performed a kirtana, bringing immense delight to all who listened. Kalyana Gosavi, standing before the Svami, attempted to perform an abhanga that illustrated the proper way to beg for alms in both one's own country and foreign lands. But he had forgotten the words.

In a playful yet instructive act, Samartha threw his cymbal, striking Kalyana's forehead and causing it to bleed. Then, in an extraordinary display of mercy, he burned his own costly garment and used its ashes to heal Kalyana's wound. Passing his hand over the forehead, the Svami made the injury vanish completely.

Renewed and inspired, Kalyana resumed the kirtana, recalling the abhanga in full. He continued performing for four ghatikas, filling the assembly with devotion and joy. When Samartha arose to lead the kirtana, the audience was overwhelmed with supreme bliss. Hands were clapped, voices shouted "Victory! Victory!" and the hearts of all bhaktas were stirred with amazement beyond words.

During the kirtana, Samartha explained the true meaning of religious deeds, worship, and the Way of Knowledge. He preached the power of Rama's holy name and organized a service that brought profound joy to all present. The kirtana continued for two watches, concluding with hymns of praise and wave offerings to the Husband-of-Janaki, Shri Rama, as everyone bowed in reverence.

The devoted follower who had hosted Samartha was Bhavani Haika, a disciple of his elder brother. The people requested him to persuade Samartha to remain until the next day, but Bhavani Haika gently reminded them, "Samartha is under no one's control. He sets out suddenly, and it is very difficult to alter his will."

As Samartha continued his kirtana, a learned Brahman woman named Bahinabai arrived. Listening intently, she felt a deep stirring in her heart. She reflected: "This worldly life is illusory, and my body and deeds are but fleeting. I must approach this Sadguru, worshipping dear Rama with all my heart."

With this resolve, she confided in Akabai, expressing her wish that Samartha remain until the next day to grant her the initiatory mantra. Akabai advised her: "No mediation will avail here. You must fall at his feet and make your request with devotion."

Bahinabai, with utmost humility, approached Samartha. She said: "Merciful one, please remain until tomorrow with all your followers and grant me the sacred mantra. I have no protector and have come as a suppliant to you. Your very name purifies sinners. Turn me away from the enticements of this worldly life and give me a place to serve you."

Samartha inquired about her home. She replied: "I live at Shiura. I came here to meet some relatives, yet unexpectedly, I have been blessed with the opportunity to see and worship you."

Ramdas assured her: "I shall come to Shiura and then proceed to Panchavati to meet Shri Rama." Filled with joy at this promise, Bahinabai fell at his feet and prepared everything for his visit.

Without notifying anyone, Samartha departed suddenly. Bhavani Naika ran after him, expressing concern that many hopes would be disappointed. Samartha replied: “It would not be right for me to return. Your love for me is known. Go back, and whenever you remember me, I shall be near.”

Arriving at Shiura, Bahinabai had prepared her home and awaited him in the street like a daughter longing for the signal to return to her parental home. From afar, she saw Samartha approaching with a large entourage. Filled with joy, she bowed at his feet in reverence.

The townspeople, having heard of Samartha’s fame, came out to welcome him and prostrated themselves before him. Bahinabai offered her extensive wada as lodging, invited numerous Brahmans, and arranged a feast. She personally washed Samartha’s feet, drank the water used, anointed him with fragrant oil, bathed him with warm water, wiped him with her garment, and clothed him in a beautiful yellow robe. She applied the three sacred marks on his forehead, smeared him with sandalwood paste mixed with saffron, adorned him with garlands, offered incense, lights, and a variety of foods, and reverently circumambulated him.

Humbled and devoted, Bahinabai fell at his feet, palms joined, saying: “I come as a suppliant with my body, mind, and property. Grant me the mantra and the opportunity to serve you closely.”

Seeing her sincerity, Samartha placed his hands upon her head and gave her the secret mantra of Lord Rama, enabling her to cross the ocean of worldly existence.

The feast was completed with Brahmans having bathed and returned. Samartha performed the worship, and Prasadam was served according to everyone’s wishes. Offerings were made to Lord Rama. Gifts and money were distributed, and the nightly kirtana began, filling all hearts with devotion.

The Brahmans listened to Samartha’s eloquence, captivated by his explanations of the power of Rama’s holy name, in full harmony with the sacred shastras. These kirtanas were performed daily for nine days. Afterwards, Samartha departed for Takli, accompanied by Bahinabai, who memorized his poems and developed a strong desire to perform seva under his guidance.

The journey continued joyfully, with disciples begging for food along the way. Upon reaching Takali, the citizens rejoiced, exclaiming: “Fortune has blessed us with the opportunity to see Samartha again!” They prostrated themselves before him. After bathing, they worshipped Maruti in the customary manner, and Brahmans performed kirtanas. Three nights passed in devotion and service.

Finally, Samartha and his company reached Panchavati, encamping at the Bamukunda tank to bathe. They visited the temple of Lord Rama, prostrating themselves on the ground like logs in reverence. The Brahman attendants anointed the deity, clothed it in a beautiful yellow robe, adorned it with ornaments, and offered perfumes, garlands, rice, incense, lights, camphor, food, and gifts of money.

With hands joined, Ramdas began his praise of Lord Rama: “I am without mantras, deeds, or indifference to worldly things. I lack cleverness and wisdom, and do not know rites or austerities. O Mother Rama, Purifier-of-sinners, carry me across the ocean of worldly life.”

The hymns of praise were sung, filling the hearts of all present with devotion and joy.

At Panchavati, his heart overflowed with joy upon beholding Lord Rama. With all the customary preparations, he worshiped the Lord and began a grand kirtana at the main entrance of the temple. As news of this spread from house to house, people gathered eagerly to listen. Eminent Brahmins, learned scholars, and expert shastris all resolved that they must hear Ramdas kirtana.

Men and women assembled in great numbers, filled with intense longing. The pavilion soon became so crowded that there was no room to move. As Ramdas stood before the deity of Lord Rama, he shone with beauty, like Garuda standing before Lord Vishnu, ready for service. At times the scene resembled Hanuman standing humbly before the Lord of Ayodhya, the universal ruler. In this mood of loving surrender, Ramdas described the glory of Rama in His manifest form.

Cymbals, drums, and all musical instruments resounded. The disciples joined together in enthusiastic singing. Gazing upon Rama, Ramdas composed inspired verses, urging all—wise and simple alike—to listen. He proclaimed Rama as the moving force of the universe, the all-pervading Lord beyond compare.

He sang of how the Goddess Sita, imprisoned by Ravana, were freed by Rama, and how Ravana was destroyed and Vibhishana was established as king of Lanka, secure in all the three worlds. He glorified Rama for granting immortality through devotion to His great servants, Vibhishana and Hanuman. He described Rama's reign of eleven thousand years, during which the earth was free from old age, death, and poverty. Ramdas praised Rama as the protector of the gods, the purifier of sinners, and the knower of the hearts of His devotees. He reminded the listeners that Shiva himself was relieved of suffering caused due to Drinking Poison by chanting Lord Rama's name, and that Rama alone possessed the power to restore life even to a stone. Just as a crystal takes on the color of what lies beneath it, so Rama removes the bonds that tie His servants to worldly existence. In this way, Ramdas narrated the life and greatness of Rama with deep feeling. Men and women listening became absorbed in devotion, nodding their heads as the name of Rama resounded loudly. Ramdas continued composing many blessed abhangas, and the kirtana flowed on until the fourth watch of the night, as the sun began to rise. He then sang the concluding hymns of praise and waved the sacred lamps before the deity of Lord Rama, the Lord of Panchavati. Sacred offerings were distributed to all, filling every heart with joy.

For three days, Ramdas continued these kirtanas. People of every kind—the wise and the ignorant, women, Shudras, and all others—found their outlook transformed. Through his worship and teaching, love for Rama awakened within them. Thus it was revealed that saints appear in the world as divine instruments to uplift humanity.

A sacred resolve arose in the heart of Ramdas. With folded hands he prayed, "It is my earnest desire to install Your divine deities throughout the valley of the Krishna River. Come there Yourself, O Lord, and make this servant one who lives only under Your protection. In this present age of Kali, people have lost faith. Their minds are polluted by false reasoning and crooked paths of thought. Therefore, wherever Your deity is installed, reveal Your power through some miracle. Whether through fear or through devotion, turn the hearts of men toward worship of You."

Listening to this prayer, Lord Rama replied with compassion, "For the sake of My devotees, I take incarnation age after age. This truth is known throughout the world through the writings of the great yogi Shuka. For Nama-the tailor, a loving devotee, I once turned the temple of Shiva itself. For the sake of Dnyanadeva, I moved a wall and made a buffalo recite the Vedas, so that his glory might spread everywhere. For twelve years I went daily to the house of Ekanatha and carried water for him. When Tukarama's manuscript was submerged in the river, I, Krishna, preserved it."

The Lord continued, "Once, when you used a pebble-bow and killed many birds, and later placed them in fire, I restored them to life and made them fly away. Wherever you yourself install My deity, there I shall remain forever, accepting the service of My devotees."

As Rama spoke these words, Ramdas bowed his head at the Lord's feet and said, "May Your grace never leave me, O Rama. Be my protector always." Tears of love streamed from his eyes, his voice choked with emotion as he gazed upon the dark-hued Lord. The thought of separation was unbearable to him. At every step he turned back again and again, longing for one last glimpse.

At last, Samartha began his journey, accompanied by his disciples. As they departed, horns and trumpets sounded loudly, and the banner of Maruti was carried at the head of the procession. Crowds gathered to see them off. Pausing

on the way, Samartha dismissed those who had come to accompany him, giving them final counsel: “Keep Rama always in remembrance. Only by this will your lives prosper.”

After speaking thus, Ramdas continued swiftly on his way. Wherever he stayed, he performed kirtana. People begged him to remain longer, but he never consented. He had no attachment to honor or fame and remained ever indifferent to worldly things.

Meanwhile, King Shivaji was restless with longing for Samartha. His kingdom and wealth no longer gave him joy. Day and night he worried, saying to himself, “When shall I meet my Sadguru again?” Scouts were sent in all directions, but no trace of Ramdas could be found. The king began fasting, taking only milk and fruit, praying constantly, “When will Rama answer my prayer? When will I see my Guru?”

At that very time, Samartha arrived and encamped in the park. After bathing and completing their devotions, the disciples settled there. The king’s scouts saw them and rushed back with joy to report that Samartha had arrived. On hearing this news, the king was overwhelmed with happiness.

The entire army was summoned. The eight ministers joined the procession, and citizens poured into the streets. Musical instruments resounded everywhere. The king walked barefoot. As soon as he saw Ramdas banner, he fell flat on the ground in prostration. Approaching his Sadguru, he offered eleven full prostrations and then embraced him with deep affection, his heart overflowing with joy.

The king applied fragrant powders to Ramdas forehead and placed a garland of flowers around his neck. Everyone rejoiced at meeting Samartha once again. Ramdas was seated in a canopied pavilion upon an elephant, while the king stood behind him, waving a fly-whisk in humble service. Instruments played joyfully as the procession moved forward. When they reached the city gate, cannons were fired. Upon entering the palace, Samartha was respectfully seated upon the throne.

As before, the king personally worshiped his Sadguru, offering garments and ornaments, and waving the sacred lights before him. A grand feast was then given to the Brahmans, who were served many delicacies until all were fully satisfied. Gifts were distributed generously.

That night, the Hari kirtana was performed. Learned pandits, scholars, shastris, and Brahmans gathered to listen. At the beginning, Samartha composed an abhanga filled with spiritual power. It was said that merely by hearing it, listeners received knowledge, inspiration, and supreme spiritual wealth.

Samartha’s words were a mine of divine bliss. The audience sat absorbed, unaware of time, until the sun rose. Lamps were then lit, hymns of praise were sung, and the sacred offering of light was waved before Lord Rama, the beloved of Janaki. Sacred gifts were distributed, and the assembly dispersed, their hearts filled with joy and devotion.

As days passed, Ramdas grew inwardly concerned. Remembering Maruti with intense devotion, he meditated upon the Son of the Wind. At once, Maruti revealed himself openly and spoke to relieve Ramdas anxiety.

“You have conceived a noble desire,” Maruti said. “An deity suitable for worship already exists. Go quickly and bring it here. Fourteen miles from this place, in a small and neglected village, there is an deity of Lord Rama. Go there by night and return swiftly.”

Having spoken thus, Maruti vanished, or rather, merged into Ramdas heart. Without delay, Ramdas set out in the night. When he reached the village and beheld the deity of Rama, his heart overflowed with joy. He lifted the deities of Rama and Sita, bound them securely to his back, and ran back to Chaphala with the speed of the wind.

At dawn, a villager came to the temple and was astonished to find the deity missing. Alarm spread quickly, and the villagers concluded that thieves must have come during the night. They examined the temple and confirmed that the deity of Rama was gone. Great confusion followed, for no one had ever heard of stone deities being stolen.

As they searched in all directions, they encountered a man who claimed to have witnessed the event. He said that he had seen the so-called mad Ramdas running with the deities tied to his back. He added that terrifying wild beasts—tigers and bears—were following him, and out of fear for his life, he had climbed a tree and escaped.

Hearing this, the villagers went to Ramdas and recognized the very deities that had disappeared from their village. They folded their hands and addressed him respectfully, saying that although his greatness was widely known and even the king was his disciple, taking the deities in this way appeared improper.

Ramdas listened calmly and replied, “I brought the Lord here by divine command. If your hearts are pure and the Lord wishes to return, then take Him away.”

The villagers brought a large cart and attempted to lift the deities, but it would not move at all. Many joined together and exerted their full strength, yet the deities remained firmly fixed. Realizing the will of the Lord, they bowed before Ramdas and said, “It is evident that Rama, the beloved of Sita, has come here because of your devotion. Therefore, install Him here and worship Him with love.”

After the villagers withdrew, Samartha reflected on where the Lord should be installed. He examined several places near the village, but none satisfied his heart. Finally, he came upon the cremation ground, about half a mile away, where a river flowed nearby and hills encircled the spot. A dense mango grove spread cool shade in all directions. Seeing this sacred and secluded place, Samartha resolved, “Here I shall establish the Recliner on Shesha.”

He immediately began the work of building the temple. Gathering his fourteen hundred disciples, they dug deep foundations. Some carried heavy stone slabs on their heads from the hills, others mixed mud, fetched water, or shaped the ground. Samartha himself placed each stone with his own hands. Like the monkeys who once built the bridge to Lanka, the disciples labored joyfully, their bodies strained but their hearts filled with devotion.

Stones lying unused in the village were also brought, and none opposed Samartha, for all submitted to him with reverence. Wherever his hands worked, extraordinary beauty appeared, as if divine powers themselves served him. In a remarkably short time, the temple, its pinnacle, a vast assembly hall, and lodging for pilgrims were completed.

Preparations for the consecration began at once. Scholars of the Vedas and astrologers fixed an auspicious day. King Shivaji arrived with garments and ornaments for the celebration. News spread rapidly, and Vaishnava devotees gathered in great numbers. Altars were placed before the hall, Maruti’s saffron banner fluttered proudly, food was prepared in abundance, and sacred chants filled the air amid music and cries of victory.

During the ceremony of infusing life into the deity, Samartha prayed intensely to Rama, pouring out his anguish of separation and longing. As his plea reached its height, the Lord of Ayodhya revealed Himself and embraced His devotee with love. To fulfill His promise made at Panchavati, Rama entered into His deity.

The Brahmans then bathed the deity with Panchamrta, adorned Him with fragrant ointments, dressed Him in yellow garments and golden cloth, crowned Him with jewels, and decorated Him with garlands and ornaments. Offerings of incense, lamps, and food were made as music thundered and devotees cried “Victory, Victory.”

An elaborate feast was offered to the Lord and then served to the Brahmans. That night, Samartha performed kirtana in the assembly hall, and his words absorbed the listeners so completely that the entire universe seemed filled with Rama alone. The kirtana continued until dawn, and such celebrations lasted four days, concluding with sacred dramas and rites.

When all departed, King Shivaji took leave, and Samartha entrusted the service of the deity to Kalyana Gosavi and Akabai. Later, as Ramdas sat alone remembering Maruti, the Son of the Wind appeared and granted him a boon. Ramdas prayed that wherever Maruti's deities were installed, miracles should manifest. Maruti agreed.

Thus Ramdas installed three forms of Maruti: one standing humbly before Rama with folded hands, another in a fierce heroic form behind, and a beautiful deity at Shinganapur, where devotees still attain victory by merely beholding it. A tall lamp pillar was erected before Rama's temple, illuminating the Lord's face for all to see. Behind Maruti stood Ganapati, completing the sacred arrangement.

After returning from Panchavati, Samartha Ramdas built a temple and installed the sacred deity. He entrusted the daily service of the Lord to Akabai, Venubal, and Kalyana Gosavi. As his glory spread, men and women from many places came to behold him and receive his blessings.

Samartha then resolved to establish the worship of Maruti, who is considered as the incarnation of eleventh Rudra (Shiva). A Maruti deity had already been installed at Chaphala, placed behind the deity of Rama. Samartha prescribed a clear and disciplined method of worship. The devotee should be pure in conduct and mind, observing celibacy, and first anoint the deity with oil. The deity should then be bathed with water, smeared with red ochre, and marked with three vertical lines made of saffron mixed with sandalwood paste. Incense and lamps should be offered with love, and curd-cakes, which Maruti greatly favors, should be presented. After sixteen days of such worship, the devotee's sincere desires are fulfilled. All the disciples followed this method and experienced the fruits of their vows.

At that time, a craftsman skilled in casting molten deities came to Samartha and bowed at his feet. Samartha asked him to make a gold deity of Maruti. The artisan requested a drawing, whereupon Samartha sketched the divine form on a copper plate. The craftsman completed the deity and offered it to Samartha, who received it with great joy.

Just then, King Shivaji arrived and bowed reverently. Seeing the small deity of Maruti, the king asked how its power would manifest. Samartha responded by composing two sacred verses. The king wrote them down, memorized them, and tied the deity to his arm. He immediately experienced its divine power. Many disciples thereafter adopted this practice, which continues even today.

Samartha taught that Maruti represents the vital life force. When life departs, the body becomes lifeless; therefore, Maruti is worshipped as the guardian of strength and vitality. With his own hands, Samartha installed twelve Maruti deities. The first was at Takali. The second at Chaphala stood humbly before Rama, while a fierce form was placed behind, signifying protection from all distress. The third was a grand deity of Balabhima at Shinganapur.

Samartha remained in Chaphala for some time, then suddenly went into the forest, followed by his disciples. They entered the town of Masura, begging for food while proclaiming, "Victory to heroic Rama." Through this method of begging, Samartha discerned true devotees from the insincere, the generous from the miserly. Only those worthy of final liberation were initiated into his discipleship.

Seeing Masura's inclination toward devotion, Samartha secretly installed a beautiful deity of Maruti by the bank of the Krishna stream outside the town. At dawn, his followers found him chanting an abhanga in praise of Maruti. As the townspeople gathered and saw the deity, they were filled with joy. Brahmans performed the worship, and a great feast was prepared.

Although food had been arranged for only a hundred, a thousand Brahmans arrived. Akabai expressed concern, but Samartha assured her that Maruti would provide. Indeed, all were fully satisfied, and the food remained undiminished. King Shivaji dined there as well, and offerings were made to Maruti before Samartha himself sat to eat. That night, kirtana filled the air, and the listeners forgot all worldly distinctions, seeing only Lord Rama everywhere.

The next day, Samartha began building a temple at Masura. Within a month, the structure was completed. He appointed a disciple to perform daily worship of Maruti, feed the hungry, beg for food during the day, and conduct kirtana every night. Samartha then departed for the forest.

The disciples continued traveling from town to town, feeding Brahmans, studying the Dasabodha, and reflecting on Samartha's teachings of right conduct and spiritual wisdom. Thus time passed fruitfully, and all remained content in devotion.

One morning Samartha Ramdas rose early and came to Shahapura. He begged for food in the town, and the people eagerly followed him, eager to serve. At night he withdrew alone and sang praises of Maruti with deep devotion. Pleased by this loving bhakti, Maruti granted him a direct vision and spoke with His own lips, promising to fulfill any desire so that Samartha's glory might spread throughout the world.

Ramdas humbly prayed that Maruti should enter the deity he had fashioned with his own hands. Maruti assured him that this would surely happen. At dawn, crowds gathered to see Samartha. When they beheld the deity of Maruti, they were filled with wonder and joy. The Brahmans were summoned, and it was resolved to formally install the deity. At that moment King Shivaji also arrived to worship Samartha. Hearing how the deity had been made during the night, the king rejoiced greatly.

Preparations were made for gifts and a grand feast. After completing his ritual bath, Ramdas sat down to worship Maruti with loving care. The deity was bathed with fragrant oils and the five nectars, and then ceremonially bathed by the Brahmans with sacred recitations. It was dressed in garments and ornaments, adorned with sandalwood paste, music, saffron, and flower garlands, making the deity radiant. Incense, lamps, camphor, and offerings of fine foods were presented, and flowers were offered according to scriptural rites.

With folded hands, Ramdas praised Maruti as his very life, his mother and father, his friend, guide, and supreme guru. He declared that through Maruti he had attained Rama and been freed from worldly illusion. After offering full prostration, the Brahmans were seated and honored with worship and a sumptuous meal. Everyone was served abundantly, and all were fully satisfied. The king, his retinue, and the townspeople of all ages dined together with Samartha in reverence.

After the feast, a great kirtana was performed. Samartha expounded the Sundara khanda of the Ramayana, delighting all who listened. As dawn broke, offerings were waved before Rama. Samartha appointed a disciple to continue the daily worship of Maruti. At last the assembly dispersed, the king returned to Satara, and Samartha departed with his disciples toward Umaraja.

When the people of Umaraja heard of Samartha's arrival, they came forth with music to welcome him and offered reverent salutations. A place was prepared for his stay, and the devout brought abundant provisions for cooking. The disciples went through the town begging for food, while large crowds gathered. Day and night the people immersed themselves in kirtana and worship, and the king frequently came to see Ramdas, drawn by deep love and devotion.

After many days, Samartha performed a miracle during the night. He fashioned a radiant deity of Maruti, its form perfect and glowing with red ochre. Before it he sang of Rama's noble character. At dawn the townspeople assembled and were astonished to behold the splendid deity standing before the Swami. Samartha instructed Kalyana Gosavi to attend to the gathered multitude. The deity was bathed and worshipped according to tradition, adorned with garments and ornaments, and offered incense, lamps, and food. Outside, instruments resounded and cries of "Victory, Victory" filled the air.

During the celebration King Shivaji arrived and bowed repeatedly before Samartha in devotion. As the worship continued, Ramdas uttered praises and many kinds of delicacies were offered to Maruti. The Brahmans were honored and fed without limit, and after the divine offering, they partook of the sacred food. The king then sat and dined with the citizens and Samartha himself.

That night a great Hari Kirtana was performed. The people remained awake through all four watches as Rama's virtues were sung with love. Sweetmeats were distributed as blessings, and at Samartha's bidding the king returned to his city. Ramdas appointed a disciple to conduct the worship of Maruti and then departed, followed by a great company of disciples.

Wandering from forest to forest, Ramdas arrived at Battisa Shirrala. He begged for food in the town, and the people bowed before him in reverence. By day the Puranas were read, and by night kirtanas were sung, turning the hearts of the people toward devotion. After some days, Samartha created a deity of Maruti. Before it he lovingly performed kirtana, and at dawn the people gathered to worship.

Seeing the beautiful deity, they were filled with wonder and said that Samartha's ways were beyond human understanding and that Maruti Himself had revealed His presence. An auspicious day for installation was fixed, and preparations began. After completing his bath and prayers, Ramdas sat to worship Maruti, inviting learned Brahmans who chanted sacred mantras. Auspicious instruments sounded outside as the deity was bathed with the five nectars and the Rudra rite was performed. Samartha himself prepared the fragrant paste.

King Shivaji arrived bearing garments and ornaments. Ramdas adorned the deity with his own hands, applying red ochre, placing a flower garland around its neck, and offering incense and lamps. The king laid his gifts before Maruti as lights were waved and Ramdas sang hymns of praise. With folded hands, Samartha glorified Maruti, tears of love flowing as the listeners were deeply moved.

Flowers were offered, mantras recited, and the image reverently circumambulated. Cooked food was then offered, and Maruti was worshipped as the Son of the Wind. Meanwhile, a grand feast was prepared. The Brahmans were honored, fed to satisfaction, and given gifts and panasupari (betel-nuts). Samartha, his disciples, and the king dined together.

Ramdas then performed a kirtana before Maruti. Learned and simple alike sat absorbed as abhangas were sung, filling the sky with the sound of the divine Name. Through all four watches of the night the kirtana continued, and the listeners lost awareness of the body. At sunrise, after hymns were sung, sweetmeats were distributed and the assembly dispersed.

Maruti revealed Himself as servant of Supreme Lord Rama, and acting through His disciple Ramdas for the salvation of the world. Samartha appointed a devotee to continue the worship and instruct all in the path of bhakti, and then departed once more for the forest with his multitude of disciples.

While wandering from place to place, Ramdas arrived at the town of Jaranda. When the people heard of his coming, joy spread everywhere. Children and elders gathered together, went out to welcome him with love, and prostrated themselves before him. With cymbals and drums resounding, Haridasas led a grand procession and brought Samartha into the town.

The disciples went from house to house begging for food, while many devotees brought offerings directly to the Swami. All were fed, and as night fell, Ramdas performed a kirtana. After more than half the night had passed, the audience returned home. Then the God-loving saint withdrew alone and meditated deeply on Maruti.

By divine will, Samartha fashioned an deity of Maruti, and into it the Son of the Wind entered. The deity appeared large, powerful, and beautifully formed. Ramdas gazed upon it with delight. At dawn, the townspeople assembled and rejoiced at the sight of Maruti. Astrologers were consulted, preparations were made, and Samartha lovingly bathed and worshipped the deity.

The deity was bathed with the five nectars, anointed by Brahmans chanting sacred mantras, and adorned with red ochre, garments, flowers, incense, and lamps. Cries of "Victory, Victory" filled the air. Cooked food was then offered privately to Maruti. Meanwhile, the Brahmans returned from their baths and were served rich food on leaf plates. After the offerings to the gods, all dined together, disciples eating in the same line as their Sadguru.

When night fell, kirtana resumed. Kalyana Gosavi led the early part, describing divine deeds. Later, Ramdas himself rose to sing, and just then King Shivaji arrived. The king bowed repeatedly, placed a garland around Ramdas' neck, and stood listening in reverence.

Understanding the people's need, Samartha sang an abhanga teaching that obscure philosophy confuses worldly minds, but direct worship of the manifest Lord removes all suffering. He glorified Rama as the purifier of sinners and praised Maruti with devotion. At sunrise, lamps were waved before the deity, sweet offerings were distributed, and the assembly dispersed. The king returned to Satara, placing his heart at Ramdas' feet. A disciple was appointed to continue Maruti's worship, and Samartha departed for the forest with his followers.

Ramdas next came to Tembhi. After begging food, the Brahmans were fed, and daily kirtanas drew the people into worship. Many received initiation, both common folk and wealthy devotees. One night, seated alone, Samartha created an enormous deity of Maruti, fierce in form and awe-inspiring in size.

At dawn, the people gathered in amazement, declaring that a time of prosperity had arrived. Arrangements were made for installation. Brahmans were invited, cooks prepared a feast, instruments played, and Samartha began the worship. The deity was bathed with the five nectars, clothed in fine garments, smeared with red ochre until it shone like Rudra Himself, and offered incense, lamps, and camphor.

The Brahmans were honored and fed, gifts were given, and Samartha dined last with his disciples. As lamps were lit and music filled the air, Ramdas led a powerful kirtana, singing the glories of Rama. The listeners forgot worldly illusion. At sunrise, final offerings were made, blessings distributed, and Samartha quietly departed into the forest, unseen even by his disciples.

Ascending into a mountain village, Samartha was welcomed by his disciples. Food was begged and collected, and he consulted Akabai on appointing a worshipper at Tembhi. She advised choosing a pure-hearted disciple whose speech could turn minds away from worldly life. Samartha agreed.

After bathing, Ramdas began worship. Brahmans were invited, and King Shivaji arrived to bow before the saint. The Brahmans dined on sanctified food, Purana recitations followed, and Dasabodha was discussed to dispel Maya. Late at night, Samartha created yet another colossal deity of Maruti, majestic and artistically perfect, filling the heart with peace.

At dawn, preparations were ordered for a grand installation. Invitations were sent far and wide, even to Shahapura. A pavilion was raised, the red banner of Maruti unfurled, Vedic chants filled the air, and the image was bathed, adorned, and worshipped. Offerings were made, flowers showered, and the final songs of praise sung.

The Brahmans were honored and satisfied with food and gifts. The king dined alongside Samartha, and a night-long kirtana followed, recounting the deeds of Maruti from the Sundara khanda. At sunrise, sacred food was distributed, the king departed, and a worthy disciple was appointed to continue worship. Samartha then hastened onward.

Wandering freely through the forest, Ramdas reached Uranbahu and installed there a colossal deity of Maruti. With deep love, he sang verses recounting the ancient legend connected to the place. When Ravana abducted Sita, Rama journeyed south with the help of bears and monkeys, built a bridge across the sea, slew Ravana, crowned Vibhishana, and returned victorious. On his way back, Rama encamped by the Krishna River with Sita, Lakshmana, and countless monkeys. While Rama bathed and worshipped Shiva in meditation, a mighty flood arose.

Seeing danger, Maruti stretched out his hands and halted the roaring waters. The river split into two streams, forming the sacred island called Ramalinga. Rama then drew Maruti's form upon a stone slab and placed it in the river, declaring that in the Kali age his Bhakta Ramdas would recover it.

Thus the Lord fulfilled His ancient promise through His servant, Samartha Ramdas, spreading devotion and awakening bhakti wherever he walked.

After installing Maruti at Urnabahu, Samartha Ramdas quietly departed without anyone noticing and swiftly reached the sacred place where Lord Rama had once worshipped and where the river Krishna divided into two streams. As he stood there, a powerful memory arose in his heart. He remembered that Lord Rama Himself had sculpted a bas-relief deity of Maruti with His own hands and had placed it deep within the waters of the Krishna. Samartha became certain that this sacred image must still be there.

He searched all around, but Maruti was nowhere to be seen. His heart grew heavy with separation, and in anguish he cried aloud, calling Maruti his very life, his refuge, and the servant of Lord Rama. He lamented that without Maruti his body burned in pain and questioned why the Son of the Wind had forgotten his divine duty.

Moved by this intense devotion, Maruti responded. A divine voice arose from beneath the water, saying that he too longed to meet Ramdas and inviting him to come into the river. Without hesitation, Samartha leapt into the deep waters of the Krishna.

People standing on the riverbank were terrified. They cried out that the waters were dangerously deep and filled with crocodiles and other creatures. Some recognized Ramdas and declared him mad, saying he had called out to Maruti and jumped to his death. Others concluded that fate had claimed his life. Meanwhile, his disciples arrived searching for him, heard the grim news, and were struck with unbearable grief. Like orphaned deer, they wandered about in shock, refusing food and water, sustaining themselves only by remembrance of their Sadguru.

Unseen by all, Ramdas remained beneath the water for seven days. During this time, Maruti granted him a direct vision, filling his heart with supreme bliss. There, embedded in a stone slab, Ramdas found the ancient bar-relief deity that Lord Rama had created. Taking the sacred deity with him, he emerged from the river.

When the people saw Samartha alive, holding the deity, they were overwhelmed with joy and astonishment. Cries of "Victory, Victory" filled the air. The townspeople marveled that he had survived so long in a deep pool filled with fierce creatures and praised the extraordinary power of saints. The disciples fell at his feet in relief and devotion. All bathed in the river and broke their long fast.

Later that night, as Ramdas sat alone in silence, Maruti again appeared before him and revealed his inner wish. He told Ramdas that the deity sculpted by Lord Rama had now been brought out and was forever engraved in his heart. Maruti instructed him to create a new deity with his own hands, install it on the riverbank for public worship, and return the ancient bar-relief to its hidden place in the depths of the Krishna.

Obedient to Maruti's command, Ramdas fashioned a beautiful new deity and installed it on the riverbank according to sacred rites. The original deity made by Lord Rama was reverently returned to the deep waters of the river. The installation was performed with full ceremonial worship.

News of this miracle spread rapidly from town to town. Large crowds gathered. Saints and devotees sang kirtanas, Brahmans chanted mantras, and Maruti was worshipped with garments, ornaments, garlands, sandalwood paste,

offerings, and final arati. The Brahmans were fed generously, and gifts and sacred offerings were distributed to all. Thus, through Samartha Ramdas, the ancient promise of Lord Rama was fulfilled, and the hidden Maruti once again blessed the world.

After completing many noble works, Samartha Ramdas traveled to the sacred city of Kolhapur, where he stayed for several days establishing faith and devotion to God. Through kirtana, the chanting of the divine name, and the worship of Vishnu, he turned many hearts toward the path of bhakti. Seeing that Ramdas lived exactly as he taught, the learned Brahmans honored him with reverence.

From the Krishna valley, Ramdas then journeyed southward into distant lands where the people were dominated by passion and ignorance, and where goodness was scarcely known. The worship of Vishnu and the knowledge of divine truth were unknown to them. Immorality and excess prevailed, and the path to spiritual wealth was entirely forgotten. The very name of Rama was disliked and considered inauspicious.

Surprised by this, Ramdas asked interpreters why the people reacted so strongly against Rama's name. They explained that in those regions, the name of Rama was uttered only at the moment of death, and it was believed that hearing it would invite misfortune. Hearing this, Ramdas resolved that only by transforming such minds could he truly be called a devotee of Rama.

He stayed there for many days, learned the local language, and began daily kirtanas in their own tongue. His words touched their hearts deeply. Many became his disciples as he revealed to them the supreme spiritual riches hidden in the divine name of Lord Rama. He explained how the cruel hunter Valmiki attained greatness merely by repeating syllables that eventually became Rama's name, and how his glory spread across the three worlds. He spoke of Shiva, whose burning pain was soothed by remembrance of Rama, and of beings uplifted by the power of the holy name. Through such teachings, Ramdas transformed the minds of the people and turned the entire region toward the worship of Rama.

Like the Ganga that purifies all who come near her, saints wander without personal motive, bringing salvation to those indifferent to spiritual life. In this way, Ramdas awakened devotion throughout the land and then gradually returned with his followers to the valley of Chaphala.

Earlier, Ramdas had entrusted Kalyana Gosavi with the worship of Shri Rama at Chaphala. When news of Ramdas's return arrived, Kalyana's heart overflowed with joy. The entire town came out to welcome their Sadguru. Musical instruments resounded, and the air was filled with celebration.

At the sight of their master, men and women, young and old, bowed in full prostration. They embraced him with love and placed garlands around his neck. With music and acclamation, Samartha entered the temple of Rama. Seeing the Lord, his heart overflowed with devotion. He fell prostrate before the deity, gazed upon it with wide-open eyes, and embraced it in ecstasy. The peace and joy of that moment were beyond expression. After bathing, he worshipped Rama according to sacred rites. As preparations for a feast were underway, King Shivaji arrived. On seeing the Sadguru, the king bowed eleven times in reverence and worshipped him with costly garments and ornaments. When the feast was ready, all dined together joyfully in the presence of Ramdas. Afterward, Ramdas accepted the offerings and, seated on the throne, instructed that preparations be made for the upcoming festival. He declared that the gods themselves desired to witness the celebration of Rama's birth (Rama Navami), and that it should be performed there, for Rama was truly present among them.

When Samartha Ramdas gave the command to celebrate the birth of Lord Rama, joy filled every heart. King Shivaji stood before the Sadguru with folded hands and offered to supply all the materials required. Ramdas gently replied that, according to the scriptures, the festival of Rama Navami should be celebrated through the collective offerings

of many devotees, not by the wealth of a single person alone. If the king wished to help, he was asked to unite his contribution with that of the others. Receiving permission, the king returned swiftly to make arrangements.

Devotees who had gathered from many villages now returned to their homes and began preparations with enthusiasm. The temple of Rama was whitewashed and beautifully decorated. Auspicious symbols were drawn with colored powders, banners were raised, and a grand pavilion was erected. Music filled the air. Disciples sent out to beg for food returned with offerings, while nearby towns sent provisions in abundance. King Shivaji sent large quantities of supplies through his officials.

The festival commenced on the first day of the bright half of Chaitra. Musical instruments resounded with great energy. King Shivaji arrived with his ministers and army, and many learned pandits, Brahmans, and Vedic priests assembled for the sacred occasion.

At dawn, Samartha bathed and worshipped Lord Rama. Vedic mantras filled the temple, and the hearts of all overflowed with happiness. The Lord of Ayodhya was ceremonially bathed with fragrant oils, saffron, musk, orpiment, and the Panchamrta. A golden bath followed, after which the deity was lovingly dried with flowing garments. Rama was adorned in yellow robes, richly woven cloth, and a splendid shawl. His forehead was marked with saffron paste, sandalwood was applied to His form, garlands adorned His neck, bracelets graced His arms, pearls shone upon His chest, and ornaments were placed upon His feet. Colored powders filled the air in celebration.

Before the Lord were placed fruits of every kind, betel leaves and nuts, and many varieties of delicious food. Dishes cooked in ghee and neatly arranged offerings were presented with devotion. King Shivaji placed gold coins before the deity as a gift. Lamps were waved, incense burned, and many kinds of sacred lights were offered. The devotees cried out “Victory! Victory!” as kirtana filled the temple entrance. With folded hands, Samartha led the final song of praise.

The deity was reverently circumambulated, flowers were offered, and all prostrated before Rama, feeling deep peace. Ramdas then composed a heartfelt hymn, pleading humbly before the Lord, confessing his own weakness and placing his entire trust at Lord Rama’s feet. Tears of devotion flowed as he bowed before the Husband of Sita.

The Brahmans returned from their baths and were seated in rows. Samartha worshipped them with his disciples, washing their feet with reverence. The water from their feet he drank lovingly, declaring that all sacred waters dwell there. Their foreheads were marked with sandal paste and musk, fragrant powders were applied, garlands placed, and lamps waved before them.

Leaf plates were spread, and light food appropriate for the fast day was served. Pickles, fruits, milk dishes, fried delicacies, curds, ghee, and sweet preparations were offered. Each was served according to taste, and all were fully satisfied. After the meal, the Brahmans blessed Ramdas, declaring that through knowledge, renunciation, and devotion, he would uplift the world.

As evening approached, crowds gathered once more for the final worship. Drums, horns, wind instruments, and countless lamps filled the surroundings with splendor. Bards sang of Rama’s heroic deeds. Lamps, incense, camphor, and offerings were made, and after the Lord was satisfied, the curtain was drawn aside and sacred sweets were distributed.

A grand procession followed. Flags bearing the emblems of the eagle, fish, and Maruti waved proudly. Rama’s image was seated upon a throne, fanned with whisks, radiant and beautiful. Music thundered, dancers sang, fireworks lit the sky, and the earth shone like dawn. Haridasas sang Rama’s glories, while the gods themselves, it was said, watched in wonder from their celestial chariots, marveling at Ramdas’s love.

Late into the night, Ramdas began kirtana. His disciples rose one by one, narrating the deeds of Rama with all nine devotional emotions. Thus the festival continued for eight days, with daily worship, kirtana, and processions filled with unmatched enthusiasm.

On Rama Navami morning, all bathed and worshipped the Lord with overwhelming devotion. The Brahmans were again honored, and sweet offerings were distributed to young and old alike. When the sun had risen one watch, Ramdas began his great kirtana. He sang an abhanga with tears flowing from his eyes, and the air resounded with the chanting of Rama's name.

Perceiving the longing of the devotees, Samartha then explained in detail the sacred significance of celebrating the birth of Lord Rama, sealing the festival with wisdom, devotion, and divine joy.

Ramdas addressed the assembled devotees and said, "Listen with attention. Rama is eternal, unchanging, and full of transcendental attributes, pure bliss and perfect intelligence. Out of compassion for His devotees, He appeared in human form. The pastimes He performed are worthy of praise by all creation, both living and non-living."

Pulastya, a great Brahman and master of austerity and knowledge, gave birth to Vishrava, renowned for wisdom. Through Kaikasi, Vishrava had three sons: Ravana and Kumbhakarna, enemies of Brahmans and gods, and Vibhishana, a devoted servant of Vishnu, firmly established in bhakti. Through severe austerities, the three pleased Brahma, who invited them to ask for boons.

Ravana asked for dominion over the three worlds, victory over the gods, vast wealth, progeny, and prosperity lasting for many ages. Brahma granted his wish. Kumbhakarna, influenced by divine intervention, asked instead for deep sleep and bodily ease, which was also granted. Vibhishana prayed only for unwavering devotion to Vishnu, constant remembrance of God, and love for Brahmans. Brahma gladly fulfilled his desire.

Empowered by his boon, Ravana conquered Lanka, defeated righteous kings, imprisoned the gods, enslaved even the planets, and spread unrighteousness across the earth. Sacrifices ceased, Brahmans and cows were tormented, and the world suffered greatly. Unable to endure this, the gods, sages, and the earth herself approached Brahma, who led them to the Ocean of Milk to seek refuge in Vishnu.

There, they offered prayers to the Lord, pleading for relief from Ravana's tyranny. A divine voice responded, declaring that the Lord would descend in the Solar dynasty as Rama, destroy Ravana, restore righteousness, and free the gods. The gods would assist by taking birth as monkeys, Shiva would manifest as Maruti, and the divine weapons would incarnate as Rama's brothers. Comforted, the gods returned to their abodes.

Turning to Ayodhya, Ramdas narrated the birth of Rama. King Dasharatha, though powerful and righteous, was without an heir. Following sacred rites performed by the sage Rishyashringa, a divine offering was given to his three queens: Kausalya, Sumitra, and Kaikeyi. Though conflict arose over the portions, by mutual generosity all three conceived.

For the sake of His devotees, the Supreme Lord manifested through Kausalya. On the ninth day of the bright half of Chaitra, at the second watch of the day, Rama, the jewel of the Solar dynasty, was born. Peace, compassion, devotion, and love seemed to dwell in Kausalya's presence. Dasharatha rejoiced and distributed gifts freely throughout the city.

Soon after, Lakshmana was born to Sumitra, and Bharata and Shatrughna to Kaikeyi. Ayodhya overflowed with joy, decorated with arches, banners, music, and celebration. The king honored Brahmans lavishly and opened his treasury without limit.

The sage Vashishtha examined the children and proclaimed Rama to be the Supreme Lord descended to restore righteousness, destroy Ravana, protect His devotees, and establish peace on earth. He foretold Rama's glorious reign and ultimate return to the divine abode. Filled with gratitude, Dasharatha accepted this prophecy as his greatest blessing.

The children were named Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata, and Shatrughna, and grew in brilliance like the moon in its fullness. With Rama's descent, the world itself was transformed. Rain fell in due season, prosperity increased, the poor became content, the sick were healed, and even nature responded with abundance. Devotion flourished, kirtana echoed in every home, and hatred, suffering, and unrighteousness vanished from the earth.

Thus, Ramdas concluded, the birth of Rama brought not merely joy to Ayodhya, but peace and renewal to the entire world.

As soon as the discourse ended, the assembly erupted with clapping of hands and loud cries of "Victory, Victory." The waves of sound rising from the kirtana, the chanting of the Lord Rama's holy names, and the joyful shouts filled the air and made the entire space resound. Samartha then sang hymns in praise of the Lord and performed the ceremonial waving of offerings before the Lord of Ayodhya. As the hymns were sung, Vaishnava devotees danced in divine ecstasy, overflowing with love.

The enthusiasm knew no bounds. No one remembered their homes, possessions, or worldly concerns. Even the king, listening to the kirtana, lost all bodily awareness. Such was the overwhelming spiritual power of the occasion. The devotees bowed fully before Lord Rama, sweetmeats were distributed to all, and the people slowly returned to their homes.

The festival continued for nine days and nine nights. On the tenth day, Samartha broke his fast and arranged a grand feast for the Brahmans, serving many varieties of exquisite food. This sacred food was so special that even the gods longed for it, exclaiming, "Blessed indeed are human beings whose faith rests in Lord Rama."

After the Brahmans had eaten, Samartha personally distributed betel leaves, areca nuts, and gifts. Then the rest of the devotees sat down to eat. The king, along with the disciples, sat in the same row as their Sadguru, sharing the meal humbly.

After the first watch of the night, a dramatic enactment of the birth of Lord Rama began. Samartha requested Kalyana to perform the play himself. Standing before the deity of Lord Rama, Kalyana sang His praises with great love and devotion. He performed flawlessly and recited Samartha's abhangas, filled with both personal devotion and deep spiritual philosophy, which the wise understood through direct experience.

The ignorant laughed at the outer form of the performance, but the wise were absorbed in its inner meaning. At the end, the devotees lovingly said to the Lord, "We have kept You awake for a long time." They then offered a large platter of betel leaves and nuts before Rama, threw fragrant red powders into the air, and once again shouted, "Victory, Victory."

Cloth was spread on the ground for the Lord to walk upon. Devotees waved peacock-feather fans and ceremonial whisks before Him. Men and women stood respectfully on both sides, while Maruti stood at the forefront. In this sacred and joyous manner, the dramatic celebration concluded, and finally, the Lord of Ayodhya was lovingly put to rest.

After this, Samartha ascended a nearby hill and sat there in solitude. Accompanied by the gentle sound of a tambourine, he composed and sang an abhang, overflowing with divine joy. From the mountaintop, his voice carried far and wide, and the people below both saw him and heard his song.

It then happened that women, shudras, children, youths, and elders among the gathered crowd were suddenly afflicted with chills, fever, vomiting, and severe illness. This strange event can be understood by recalling what had been mentioned earlier. That place had once been a burial ground, which Samartha had purified by installing the sacred deity of Lord Rama there.

When Samartha arrived, the demons who had inhabited that cremation ground fled in terror, their power completely destroyed by his spiritual radiance. Enraged by this loss, those demons later attempted to trouble the assembled people. As a result, fever, dysentery, vomiting, and severe suffering spread among the crowd, and their condition became serious.

When Ramdas learned of this, he summoned Vetala, the king of the demons. Ramdas said to him firmly, “Your army is troubling the gathered devotees. This cannot be tolerated. They must be punished.”

Hearing Samartha’s command, Vetala folded his hands in reverence and replied, “Your word is my supreme authority.” Immediately, he ordered all his demons to withdraw. He warned them sternly, “Leave this place at once. If Maruti hears that you are troubling these devotees, he will bind you all to his tail.”

At Vetala’s command, all the demons fled in fear and abandoned the place completely. The afflicted people recovered their health, and all were able to return safely to their homes.

There had been many kinds of demons dwelling there, and Ramdas, angered by their mischief, rebuked them for causing suffering to his devotees. The water spirits who lived along the riverbanks fled in panic. Black female spirits, wild female deities, and fierce goddesses also ran away. Female ghosts, lustful female demons, and terrifying spirits fled out of fear of Maruti. The buffalo demon wandered helplessly from forest to forest in search of a place to stay.

Many other ghosts of various kinds, whose names are too numerous to list, abandoned all hope of ever returning after receiving Vetala’s command. Even the female demons who cause suffering to women during childbirth fled in terror. Vetala searched the entire region, but not a single demon could be found remaining.

After issuing his command, Vetala traveled to Kailasa, the abode of Lord Shiva. There he bowed before Shiva, the Lord of Parvati, and worshipped the supreme Yogi. Shiva asked him, “Why did you go to the land of mortals? What extraordinary events occurred there? Tell me at once.”

In reply, Vetala said, “The noble Vaishnava Ramdas is there. He has taken upon himself the task of saving the world. In the village of Chaphala, he has installed the sacred deities of Lord Rama and celebrated the festival of Rama’s birth. A great crowd gathered there. That place was formerly a burial ground, and the people became afflicted by demons. Ramdas summoned me and struck fear into my heart. He said, ‘If you do not remove your demons, Maruti will be angered.’ Therefore, I freed the place of all demons.”

Hearing this account, Lord Shiva laughed heartily and said, “Maruti is my amsha, and Ramdas himself has manifested from a portion of me. There is no difference between us in thought or feeling. Shri Rama is the deity I worship. Know this for certain: it is I myself who have become Ramdas for the salvation of the world.”

As Shiva, the destroyer of Cupid, spoke these words, Vetala was astonished and said, “Had I not withdrawn my demons, they would surely have been destroyed completely.”

Meanwhile, Samartha summoned the inferior gods and spirits and addressed them firmly, saying, “If you intend to trouble the assembled devotees, leave this place at once. If you disobey my command, Maruti will lash your backs with his tail.” Hearing these words, they were struck with fear and fled immediately.

Evil spirits such as Mairya, Purusha, Birdeva, the impure Chandalini, and Bhairava abandoned the place and began searching for another town to inhabit. Thus, all inferior deities and ghosts departed, except the Buffalo Demon, Mahishasura. He alone remained and stood before Samartha with folded hands. Humbly he said, “Let me remain near the lamp pillar. I will harm no one and will only look upon the assembled devotees.”

He bowed from a distance and added, “When the chariot of the Lord passes, give me a coconut. I shall ask for nothing more.” Samartha accepted his request and granted permission.

Kalyana Gosavi then asked Ramdas why he had removed the deities of inferior deities. Samartha replied, “These deities cause people to commit violence. Men of impure minds make vows to them and offer animal sacrifices to fulfill their desires. Such acts lead directly to hell. Therefore, one should worship Shri Rama with love instead.

Blessed are those Vaishnava devotees whose family deity from ancient times has been Shri Rama. They are saved, and they save others as well. Those whose hearts are fixed on the holy name of Rama care nothing for petty deities. They do not concern themselves with mantras, tantras, rituals, or rigid rules. They care only for the name of Rama.

For one whose Japa is Rama’s holy name, whose austerity is Rama’s holy name, whose effort is only the repetition of Rama’s holy name, and who finds joy and final liberation through Rama’s holy name alone, scriptures have no meaning apart from that holy name. To whom Rama is sacrifice, wealth, desire, refuge, guide, beginning, and end, such a devotee should be regarded as great devotee of Lord Rama.”

Hearing these teachings, the people bowed in reverence. Only those whose hearts were ripe for devotion accepted Samartha’s words.

Samartha then called the king’s attendants to the hill and instructed them to perform duties according to their abilities. He said, “When the festival of Rama Navami approaches, all of you must arrive a few days early and carry out the tasks assigned to you.”

Samartha carefully assigned work suited to each person. At the time of the festival, they came joyfully and performed their duties with devotion. Some cleaned and whitewashed the temple walls, while others painted sacred designs. Skilled women cooks prepared spiced cakes and special dishes, while women of pure conduct were given duties requiring ritual sanctity.

Some attendants cared for the lamps, keeping them bright and polished. Others joyfully served Brahmans. Some managed the storerooms, while others brought supplies. Some stood guard before the deity, while others carried the palanquin, both in front and behind. Certain attendants waved fly whisks and peacock fans.

Others prepared fragrant sandal and black paste, applied sacred powders, or attended to the needs of those dining. Some arranged seating for kirtans, while others supplied water to the thirsty. Skilled servers anticipated the wishes of diners and served food accordingly.

All these attendants accepted Samartha’s commands with reverence and bowed before him. They returned every year to perform these duties with devotion.

On the full-moon day, Samartha celebrated the sacred birth of Hanuman, Maruti. King Shivaji arrived with abundant offerings, and joy filled the hearts of all present. After bathing at the auspicious hour, Samartha began the worship of Maruti. Sacred music resounded, Brahmans chanted Vedic mantras, and the deity was lovingly anointed with fragrant oils and bathed with the five nectars. The deity was adorned with red ochre, garments, ornaments, jewels, and garlands. Incense and lamps were offered, followed by betel leaves, gifts, and cooked food, greatly pleasing the Son of the Wind. Hymns of praise concluded the ritual amid loud cries of victory. Brahmans were then seated in long rows and fed to their full satisfaction. Samartha next began the kirtana. The assembly listened in reverent silence, while King Shivaji remained absorbed in the divine presence of his sadguru. Suddenly Samartha cried out the name of Maruti, and loving claps and echoes filled the air. He then taught that the surest path to salvation is unwavering trust in Rama’s holy name. One who repeats the divine name while engaged in daily duties is always in meditation. One who remembers God with every morsel of food is equal to one who fasts. Through constant repetition of the divine name, the seeker’s nature is transformed. Peace, detachment, and clarity arise, and the illusions of Maya are destroyed. Samartha declared that even Shiva experienced the power of Rama’s holy name, and later took birth as

Maruti to serve and worship Rama. Hearing this, King Shivaji humbly asked why Shiva had assumed the form of a monkey. At the request of the assembly, Samartha narrated the sacred story of Maruti's birth. Lamps of camphor were waved before the deity, sweetmeats distributed, daily worship continued, Brahmans were fed, and kirtanas were performed with devotion.

In this way, Samartha celebrated Maruti's birth simultaneously in eleven villages, appearing in different forms in each place. Every village believed he had stayed there personally to complete the celebration. When Brahmans returned to Chaphala and saw Samartha worshipping Rama, they were astonished, for each testified that he had been with them in different towns at the same time. When questioned, Samartha smiled and explained that God's actions cannot be measured by human reason. Just as Krishna appeared simultaneously as calves, cows, and cowherds, so divine power allows such manifestations. The Lord, he said, experiences no difficulty in assuming many forms. Hearing this, the disciples bowed in reverence, acknowledging that neither Brahma nor Shiva could comprehend the limits of their Sadguru's power. Through Samartha's words and songs, all doubts vanished, and faith was firmly established.

After the feasting, the reading of the Puranas and Dasbodha began, clarifying truth and illusion. Many saints gathered for the celebration, including Jairama Gosavi, Ranga Gosavi, Vamana Gosavi, and Muni Gosavi, along with King Shivaji, ministers, and learned scholars.

In that assembly, Samartha shone like the moon among stars. Without pride or contention, he expounded profound philosophical truths. Akabai answered questions from learned pandits, explaining the three accepted paths taught by the Vedas: action, devotion, and knowledge. Hearing these teachings, the wise declared the day blessed, for all doubts were removed. Samartha then distributed sweetmeats to all, and the gathering ended in joy and devotion.

A large group of poets once gathered near the king's court, loudly quarreling among themselves. Because of the disturbance, the doorkeepers refused them entry. When Ramdas asked about the commotion, he was told that rival poets had come seeking judgment. The pandits then asked Samartha for his view. He explained that all creation arises from the three gunas—goodness, passion, and ignorance. The Vedas, scriptures, and divine stories are shaped by these three qualities. Each guna, he said, has its own kind of poet. The bold, original poet is dominated by ignorance. The active (passion) poet excels in repetition, similes, and historical narration. Those rooted in goodness are saints, whose inspired poetry flows with devotion and pleases the Lord. Hearing this explanation, all felt satisfied.

Samartha then told the king to allow the poets inside. Many, driven by pride, entered noisily, beating tambourines and cymbals, dressed in bright garments, chewing betel, marked with ash and tilaka, and behaving arrogantly. Seeing them, the saints smiled, remarking that even this seemed like the Lord Rama's own play. The poets bowed before Samartha and the king and said they had been quarreling since the month of Phalguna, each claiming superiority. They requested that their poems be heard and judged. The king humbly asked Samartha to decide, saying that pride could only be cured by spiritual wisdom. Ramdas invited them to sing. They competed fiercely, praising Ganapati and boasting through their verses, but neither side surpassed the other. Samartha stopped them and said that their knowledge and skill were equal, but their pride was the real obstacle. Dissatisfied, the poets demanded a clear declaration of superiority. Samartha then proposed a test: he would sing a verse, and whoever could rightly respond would be considered superior. He asked Kalyana to take up the tambourine, and together with other disciples, they sang with devotion. As the poets listened to Samartha's verses, their pride melted away. They bowed before him, admitting defeat. Ramdas honoured them with garments and betel, and they returned home praising him with gratitude.

Afterward, Samartha distributed gifts to the Brahmins and honored the Vaishnavas. The king then returned to Satara, while Samartha suddenly departed for Shahapura. Devoted disciples such as Akabai, Venubai, and the wise Bahinabai followed him, along with many others. Traveling through various places, he worshipped Maruti and preached devotion to Shri Rama. Wherever he went, people gathered with reverence, became his disciples, and were drawn toward liberation through his kirtanas.

Then Ramdas went to Kolhapur and turned the hearts of the people toward the worship of Rama. Then he reflected, "I must visit all the sacred places of this region and behold the deities there. If I remain in one place, the spiritual needs of the people will not be fulfilled." With this thought, he quietly entered the forest without revealing his intention, leaving the people astonished.

Samartha went and stayed on the mountain called Chandragiri, known today as Mahabaleshwar. His disciples searched for him anxiously and finally discovered him there. This was the very place where Rama, while searching for Sita, had met Hanuman. Delighting in the serene beauty of the surroundings, Ramdas remained absorbed in joy.

There is a heavenly lake there from which abundant waters flow. Lotuses bloom upon its surface, and merely gazing at it fills the heart with peace. The glory of the place is extraordinary, and Ramdas himself sang of it in an abhanga, praising the hidden summit where the Lord of Yogis resides, a place so lofty it seems to pierce the heavens.

The mountain is wondrously beautiful. The sky above appears like solid blue crystal, the air is calm, and even in summer the climate is gentle. On either side flow the Krishna and Koyna rivers, while below lie fertile fields, winding paths, and travelers moving to and fro. Herds of cattle graze on the heights, and shepherd boys play freely among the slopes. Mist rises and falls, revealing sheer cliffs and deep valleys, while the view toward the Konkan resembles another Kailasa, awakening longing in the heart. This sacred mountain stands between Manadesh on one side and the southern Konkan and Karhad on the other, with holy places nearby. Lord Rama Himself once came here for the sake of Hanuman, and the sight of the Lord fills the eyes with joy. Hanuman, the eleventh Rudra, is Ramdas' refuge, and devotees are urged to hasten to this holy place. Such was the glory of Mahabaleshwar as sung by Ramdas himself. He remained there for three months, daily performing fervent kirtanas and filling the region with devotion.

Ramdas also visited the many sacred places around Kolhapura that are celebrated in the Puranas. He went to each of them in reverence. Kolhapura is presided over by Goddess Mahalakshmi, who destroyed the demon Kolhasura and thus became renowned in the scriptures. Her glory is praised throughout the Puranas.

The city is adorned with many temples and sacred ponds such as Rankala and Padmala, whose waters are considered extremely pure. Bathing in them is believed to cleanse not only the body but also the inner impurities of the soul.

To the north of Kolhapura lies the holy town of Keshapura on the banks of the Panchaganga River, a place of great spiritual merit. Nearby is the Jalasayana Lake, filled with blooming lotuses, from where the majestic fort of Panhala can be clearly seen. Further ahead rises the mountain associated with the sage Markandeya, and above it stands Ratnakara. Kedareshvara, drawn by divine love, is said to have come here from the Himalayas.

Ramdas then visited Lakshmiche Sirale, a place known for the presence of sacred serpents. A great pilgrimage is held there during the month of August on the occasion of Nagapanchami, inspired by deep faith in the spiritual power of the serpents. From there he passed through Dhavaleshvara, Bholeshvara, Rudreshvara, and Chapeshvara, all places whose extraordinary glory is said to have been declared by Lord Rama Himself.

At Chandragiri, known as Mahabaleshwar, a humble and pride-free poet once lived. Ramdas visited all these sacred sites with great joy and devotion. After completing his pilgrimage of the southern holy places, he returned to his disciples. When he came back to the valley of Chaphala, the people rejoiced greatly. Ramdas stayed there for a few days and then set out again into the forest with his disciples. While the disciples went out to beg for food, Samartha performed his ritual bath. When the meal was ready, all sat down together, forming a circle around their revered master.

Turning to the events at Mahuli, what occurred there was most extraordinary. Uddhava Gosavi lived in that town, where he and his followers regularly performed kirtanas. Large gatherings of men and women of high standing

assembled to listen. Cymbals, vina, and drums resounded, hand instruments played rhythmically, and the air was filled with the loud chanting of Rama's holy names.

At that time, Emperor Aurangzeb maintained a police post at Mahuli. The local Muhammadan officer became enraged on hearing the kirtana. In anger, he ordered his subordinates to charge the singers with disorderly conduct, arrest them, and bring them before him. Obeying his command, the soldiers rushed in violently.

Men and women of the highest rank were seated listening when the soldiers began to beat the gathering mercilessly. The sudden attack scattered the assembly at once, just as a sacred gathering dissolves when defiled by an unexpected calamity. In panic and confusion, the audience fled in all directions.

The soldiers continued their assault, striking indiscriminately. Some respected citizens appealed to the officer, saying, "These devotees are followers of Ramdas. You should not trouble them." But the officer would not listen. He was of a cruel and irreligious nature and bore hatred toward Lord Vishnu, just as Ravana raged at the praise of Rama, or Jarasandha disliked hearing of Krishna.

Like one burning with fever who rejects even sweet food, or a deaf man who finds no joy in music, these men found no pleasure in hearing the names of Hari. They insulted Brahmans, defiled their sacred marks (tilaks), and destroyed ancient temples, using their stones to build mosques. Only places protected by visible miracles were spared.

While Uddhava Gosavi was performing kirtana, the violence intensified. The officer sent further orders to arrest the Hindu devotees. The soldiers broke instruments, snapped the strings of the vina, destroyed the drums, bound Uddhava, and dragged him away with the other leaders.

Fear spread through the town. People whispered in anguish, "When will God overthrow this oppressor?" The officer sat on his balcony as Uddhava was brought before him. He commanded that a kazi be summoned to convert Uddhava by force.

Bound and trembling, Uddhava meditated on the feet of his Sadguru Ramdas and cried out inwardly, "O my mother Sadguru, come quickly to my aid. What fate is written upon my brow?"

At that very moment, Ramdas was seated at Chaphala. Suddenly, Lord Rama appeared before him and revealed all that was happening. Like a mother rushing to save her endangered child, the Sadguru hastened at once. When Akabai asked the reason for his sudden departure, Ramdas replied calmly, "They intend to convert Uddhava. I must go to him."

Though it seemed that Ramdas set out hurriedly, in truth he instantly appeared at Mahuli in the fierce form of Maruti. As the officer ordered the conversion to proceed, a terrifying roar shook the assembly. The ground seemed to tremble as at the end of the age.

Maruti leapt forward and struck the officer, sending him sprawling to the ground. His servants fled in terror. For several hours the officer lay unconscious. When he revived, he fell at Samartha's feet with folded hands, crying, "You are God in visible form. Forgive my sin. I am your guilty servant."

Samartha then assumed his gentle form and spoke calmly, "Why do you hate others? That hatred is why you were struck. Did God create only one people? Your own scripture says that God is the preserver of the whole world."

He then composed an abhanga in the Muhammadan tongue, teaching the truth of divine unity.

Samartha composed a vast body of poetry, including many verses in the Musalman language. Ramdas composed countless abhangas of great variety. I have not been able to gather them all, yet even a small portion gives deep spiritual delight. Some verses he wrote on palm leaves and cast into the waters of the Krishna River. A few of these

later reached King Shivaji, while others were preserved by Kalyana Gosavi. When Ramdas wandered alone in forests, absorbed in prayer to Shri Rama, only the Supreme Lord knows who recorded those tender verses.

Valmiki's poetry is said to number in the billions, yet only a fraction is known to the world. One perceives only what one is destined to see. In the same way, saints compose innumerable verses for the salvation of the world. No mind can retain them all. Ramdas possessed a vast intellect; even his casual speech flowed naturally in abhanga metre. Therefore, one must remain content with the few verses that have come down to us.

After the punishment he received, the Muhammadan officer begged Ramdas for forgiveness and declared that no one should henceforth obstruct Brahmans or interfere with Hari kirtanas. Making obeisance to Samartha, he granted full freedom for religious observance.

Ramdas then released Uddhava and proceeded to Pali, staying at the renowned temple of Khandoba. Sitting with his disciples, he warned them to remain vigilant, saying that Kaliyuga was an age of great evil, and that only by Rama's grace could seekers cross this ocean of worldly existence. Hearing this, the disciples bowed and said, "If you are favourable to us, all obstacles will vanish."

With Ramdas' permission, they went into the town to beg for alms. News of his arrival spread quickly, and people came forward eagerly, offering supplies for cooking. While Samartha bathed, food was prepared, and Brahmans recited the Vedas aloud in the temple.

That night, a kirtana was performed, and the next day Ramdas departed. The king accompanied him with his disciples to the Valley of Chaphala, where they worshipped Rama and Maruti and shared their meal.

Seated informally among his disciples, Samartha then issued his command. They were to wander throughout the land—north to Benares and south to Rameshwara—visiting sacred places and spreading devotion. Wherever sincere seekers surrendered themselves fully, they were to be initiated. They were to beg daily for food, accept whatever was given with gratitude, avoid worldly desires, and return in time for the celebration of Rama's birth (Rama Navami).

Obeying his command, the disciples departed and established countless religious centres across the land. Wherever they went, devotion to Rama flourished, festivals were celebrated, Brahmans were honoured, and the spirit of renunciation awakened in many hearts. Thus Ramdas, truly the incarnation of Maruti, saved innumerable souls and sent his disciples far and wide to turn the world toward the worship of Shri Rama.

Once, King Shivaji humbly requested Samartha Ramdas to use the wealth of his kingdom for religious festivals. Ramdas replied that Rama alone was his benefactor and that he desired nothing apart from Him. Begging for food, he said, was an eternal and fearless path, while royal wealth was perishable. Accepting it would bind even a seeker of liberation to worldly ties.

Shivaji then offered half his kingdom, but Ramdas firmly declined, explaining that all kingdoms pass away and are eventually lost, whereas dependence on begging keeps one free from fear. Hearing this, the king fell silent, deeply moved by Samartha's wisdom.

As Ramdas sat in the seat of honor, he appeared radiant to his followers, like Shiva among yogis, the moon among stars, or Vishnu among His devotees. His words were a treasury of spiritual wisdom, understood only by the truly fortunate.

Later, King Shivaji went to Parali and ordered the construction of a magnificent residence for Ramdas. The uneven land was levelled, spacious buildings with verandahs and kitchens were built, and the place became pleasing to all who saw it. Disciples begged for food daily, Brahmans were fed, and kirtanas filled the air with devotion and love.

Though wild animals and monkeys lived nearby, none caused harm. Monkeys freely played upon the temple of Rama day and night, a sight that delighted all and testified to the sanctity of the place.

A saint named Keshava Swami, living at Bhaganagara, heard of Ramdas's fame—his renunciation, purity, devotion to Rama, and his establishment of Maruti shrines in the Chaphala valley. Though eager to meet Ramdas, Keshava was physically weak and sent instead a Brahman disciple with a letter.

Lacking money for the journey, the disciple was given only a seer of rice. Throughout his fifteen-day journey, the rice never diminished, though he cooked and ate from it daily. Reaching Chaphala, he met Ramdas, who welcomed him warmly, honored the letter as though Keshava himself had come, and embraced the messenger with affection.

After three days, the disciple prepared to return. Ramdas gave him garments and arranged funds through the king, but the Brahman declined cash out of fear of thieves. Instead, he received a written order. For food, Ramdas instructed that uncooked provisions be given—wheat flour, rice, pulses, ghee, sugar, and salt—altogether weighing one pound.

Miraculously, this food lasted the entire return journey, just as the rice had earlier. When the Brahman narrated this to Keshava Swami, both saints rejoiced, recognizing one another's spiritual stature. Keshava bowed reverently to Ramdas's reply, their hearts united in understanding.

One day in Chaphala, as his disciples sat near him, Ramdas suddenly declared, "Let us go at once to Pandhari." Without delay, he set out, and his disciples followed joyfully, worshipping him as they walked. As the news spread from village to village that Samartha Ramdas was on his way to Pandharpur, crowds of pilgrims joined the journey. Their joy overflowed. Cymbals clashed, drums thundered, the vina sounded sweetly, singers marched with banners, and the noble Vaishnavas created a spectacle of divine splendor.

Wherever Ramdas halted for the night, he performed kirtana, filling listeners with devotion to Rama and detachment from worldly bonds. Meanwhile, Shivaji Maharaj hurried to Chaphala to meet his guru, only to learn from Bahinabai and Annapa Gosavi that Ramdas had already departed with all his followers for Pandhari. Delighted, the king gathered offerings and followed the pilgrimage.

On the tenth day of the bright fortnight of Kartika, Samartha reached Pandharpur. When the pilgrims beheld the shining dome of Vithoba's temple from afar, their hearts overflowed with joy. Saints embraced saints, exchanged namaskaras, and all sense of pride dissolved. Singing hymns, waving lamps, and chanting God's names aloud, they walked barefoot to the city. They bathed in the Chandrabhaga river, completed their rites, worshipped Maruti, visited the shrine of Pundalika, and circumambulated the sacred town.

Soon after, Shivaji arrived and rejoiced at the sight of the vast gathering. He bowed to Ramdas, greeted the saints, and arranged tents along the sandy banks of the river. Everywhere rang cries of "Victory, Victory," as banners fluttered, music resounded, and kirtanas continued without pause.

Accompanied by cymbals and drums, Ramdas himself led the procession into the temple, singing in his tender, loving voice. At the great doorway, he prostrated fully upon the ground. He first worshipped Maruti and spoke with him privately, words unheard by others. He bowed to the gatekeepers Jaya and Vijaya and then entered the sanctum. There stood the dark, radiant Lord, eyes fixed upon the tip of His nose, hands resting on His waist, feet placed upon the sacred brick.

Ramdas embraced the deity with love and placed his head upon the Lord's lotus feet. In that sacred meeting, the boundary between devotee and God vanished. The Lord spoke gently, "My dear bhakta, my very life, you have

been cruel to me." Ramdas replied, "My mind never leaves Your feet. Only my body wanders by destiny. All that exists, moving or unmoving, is Your form. There is no place where You are not, O Chakrapani."

Pleased, the Lord said, "Knowledge, detachment, and devotion dwell fully in you. Therefore I long to see you." Moved by Ramdas' words and songs, the Lord embraced him deeply and said, "I always dwell in the temple of your heart, but now I wish to meet the saints gathered at the Garuda platform."

After circumambulating the temple, Ramdas worshipped Rukmini, Satyabhama, Lakshmi, and Radha, and then went to the Garuda platform. There he beheld a radiant assembly of saints who had conquered the six inner enemies and attained direct realization. Among them were Ranga Swami, Jayarama Gosavi, Bodhala, and the great saint Tukaram, who was immersed in kirtana.

Seeing Ramdas, the saints rose in joy, falling at each other's feet and embracing with love. Tukaram prostrated in delight and continued his kirtana with renewed fervor. Shivaji and his ministers listened reverently as fourteen Vaishnavas sang with cymbals and drums, filling the air with cries of "Victory to Vitthala." Tukaram's heart overflowed, and he sang blessings upon all.

As night fell, lamps were waved before Vithoba, and sweet offerings were distributed. Seated among the saints, Ramdas said joyfully, "Today my heart is fulfilled by this kirtana." He then recited a verse praising the sweetness of God's names, likening them to endless delicacies that only increase the hunger of love.

On the eleventh day, Pandharpur overflowed with joy. That night, another great kirtana was held on the river sands. Saints, renunciants, and brahmanas sat together in unity as Ramdas sang abhangas through all four watches of the night. At sunrise, offerings were again waved to Vithoba, and sweets were shared.

That same morning, Shivaji arranged a grand worship. The Lord was bathed with panchamrita, dressed in yellow silk, adorned with garlands and jewels. Ramdas offered incense, lamps, and flowers as brahmanas chanted mantras. Afterwards, the twice-born were honored with gifts, and the king, saints, and attendants dined together. In the afternoon, recitations from the Puranas were held, and Akabai herself read from the Dasabodha.

Thus, the pilgrimage of Samartha Ramdas at Pandharpur was completed in love, music, and devotion, uniting saints, kings, and common people in the name of Vitthala.

Before these events, a significant incident took place at Pandharpur. One of Ramdas' disciples had earlier stayed there for many days, sustaining himself by begging and daily reading the Dasabodha. Sitting upon the Garuda platform, he respectfully explained its meaning to pious listeners.

One day, learned Panditas and Vedic Brahmans gathered and questioned him about the book. When the passage describing the fourteen Brahmas was read, they denounced it, claiming that a modern Marathi text lacked scriptural authority. This criticism eventually reached Samartha Ramdas, and it was after this that he undertook the pilgrimage to Pandharpur with his disciples.

Now, as Akabai was publicly reading and explaining the Dasabodha, many saints and noble souls assembled to listen—among them Nimbaraibava of Daithana, Jayarama Gosavi, Sheikh Muhammad, Rangaswami of Nigadi, and the great Tukaram, the avatara of Namadeva. The pavilion overflowed with saints, devotees, and seekers. Leading brahmanas questioned Ramdas about the scriptural authority of the fourteen Brahmas. As debate intensified, a remarkable event unfolded.

Hearing of Ramdas' arrival, the leading Brahmans of Pandharpur—Panditas, Vedics, and other learned scholars—came together to the temple. They accused Ramdas of setting aside ancient Sanskrit and Marathi scriptures and

promoting his own ideas through the Dasabodha. They recalled how his disciple had earlier failed to answer their doubts and now demanded that Ramdas himself explain the doctrine of the fourteen Brahmas.

Samartha welcomed them respectfully and offered them seats of honor. At that moment, Akabai was reading the relevant section of the Dasabodha. When questioned about its authority, Ramdas responded calmly, using profound illustrations. He explained that just as creation unfolds in stages—from the unmanifest to space, air, fire, water, earth, grain, seed, and living beings—so too spiritual knowledge unfolds organically from scriptural truth. Marathi compositions, he declared, do not arise without divine and scriptural foundation.

Still, the Panditas insisted on knowing precisely which scripture mentions the fourteen Brahmas, saying that examples alone could not remove their doubts. As this debate intensified, an extraordinary and decisive event was about to occur.

The divine chorister Malaya, cursed by Narada, had taken his third and final birth in the sacred city of Pandharpur, this time in the body of an outcaste. Carrying heavy bundles of firewood, he moved from tent to tent seeking a livelihood. Samartha Ramdas noticed him and asked Kalyana to bring the man before him.

Standing humbly with folded hands, the man was questioned about his caste. He replied with profound insight, saying that from the standpoint of names he was nameless, and from the standpoint of truth he was pure intelligence. Hearing this Vedantic reply from one of the lowest birth astonished the assembled scholars.

Samartha instructed Kalyana to draw a circle around him and asked the man to step beyond it. As he did so, another circle was drawn, and his nature appeared transformed. When questioned again, he declared himself as “Anandha,” untouched by ignorance and full of perfect knowledge. Each time Samartha drew a new circle and questioned him, the man revealed a higher identity—first as a Shudra without inferiority, then as a Vaishya free from pride, then as a Kshatriya imperishable in essence, and finally as a Brahman, the knower of Supreme Lord.

At this point, his body shone with divine radiance. Sacred marks and the sacred thread appeared upon him. From his own lips, he recited Sanskrit verses listing the fourteen Brahmas, resolving the doubts that had troubled the Panditas. Their pride vanished, and the saints rejoiced.

Samartha then asked him to recount his former lives. The transformed Brahmana revealed that he had once been the heavenly singer Malaya, cursed for indulgence. His first rebirth was as a louse during the time of King Jayatpala, from which he was freed by the sight of Mukundaraja. His second birth was as a buffalo at Paithan, where Dnyanadeva made him recite the Vedas, astonishing the Brahmans. Dnyanadeva foretold that his final birth would be as a Mahar at Pandharpur, where Ramdas would liberate him.

As Samartha blessed him, the mortal body split open, and the divine being within rose upward toward heaven. Witnessing this miracle, the Panditas abandoned all pride and praised Ramdas as God manifest in human form. Samartha, however, humbly declared that the liberation had occurred through the merit and grace of the Brahmans themselves.

As they departed, the scholars reflected in awe upon the miracles of Mukundaraja, Dnyanadeva, and now Ramdas. Their doubts about the Dasabodha were fully resolved, and they acknowledged Ramdas as a saint of perfect goodness, unequalled among men.

The people of Pandharpur spoke among themselves with amazement: “Blessed indeed is the bhakti of Ramdas. He is truly the visible incarnation of Maruti. He has accomplished what seems impossible.” Hearing of his glory, saints of every kind gathered around him—seekers of liberation, those detached from worldly life, and those filled with wisdom.

King Shivaji hastened to Ramdas, fell prostrate before him in reverence, and how the bhaktas raised joyous cries of “Victory, Victory,” witnessing a deed beyond human power. Samartha Ramdas daily conducted kirtanas, and during

these sacred gatherings the devotion of the listeners overflowed with enthusiasm. Such was the intensity of divine love that Maruti himself came unseen and danced joyfully, unable to restrain his devotion.

Soon the day of the full moon arrived, and Nimbaraia performed the Gopalakala. A great multitude of saints assembled to witness this sacred festival, which concluded in an atmosphere of divine joy.

After the first day of the dark fortnight, the pilgrims began their return. A vast crowd gathered at the great temple gate, for every heart was filled with love. Late at night, Ramdas entered the temple alone. With deep affection he embraced the Lord and sought His permission to depart.

Placing his head at the Lord Panduranga's lotus feet, Ramdas prayed, "I now return to the valley of the Krishna. Continue Thy grace upon me, O Shri Hari." As he spoke, his eyes filled with tears. The dark-hued Lord gently caressed him and said, "I am always with you."

Fixing the divine form firmly within his heart, Ramdas took leave of the Lord, met with Maruti, and proceeded to the river's sandy bank. There he bathed, worshipped, and took his meal. Then the royal procession began. The swami was seated beneath a canopy on an elephant, while the king himself waved the fly-whisk in reverence.

Wherever the procession halted for the night, Ramdas performed kirtana. At last he reached the Valley of Chaphala, where he had the blessed vision of Sri Rama.

On the following day, Ramdas offered a festive feast to the Brahmans. After taking leave of the saint, the king returned to his palace. Ramdas remained for many days in the Valley of Chaphala, continuing his daily kirtanas and expounding the Dasabodha.

At this time Jayarama Gosavi of Vadagava came to meet Ramdas. The two saints exchanged respectful namaskaras, and Samartha seated Jayarama with honor and affection. Out of devotion, the king himself lovingly waved the fly-whisk over Ramdas.

Jayarama Gosavi then made a heartfelt request. He said, "I intend to celebrate the birth of Lord Krishna at my house. I invite you to come with all your followers. This is the earnest desire of my heart."

Ramdas replied, "In what manner do you plan to celebrate the festival? Tell me also the order and observances you follow."

Jayarama explained, "On the first day of the fortnight, the deity of Lord Krishna will be installed in the pavilion. For nine days Brahmans will be fed daily. Every night kirtanas will be performed. On the tenth day, the Gopalakala will be celebrated, with the divine deeds of Krishna enacted through drama during the night."

Samartha said, "Your plan is excellent. But I have one wish regarding the journey. If you arrange for a chariot for the Lord, I will surely come with my followers."

Jayarama replied anxiously, "The festival days are very near. How can such a chariot be prepared so quickly?"

Ramdas reassured him, saying, "Do not worry. I shall build a large chariot myself and come with all my followers. You will have much to attend to at the temple and monastery, so return quickly."

Hearing this, Jayarama Gosavi was filled with joy. He took leave of all and returned to Vadagava.

Ramdas then sent men into the forest to bring bamboo for the chariot. Through his extraordinary skill, Samartha constructed a magnificent chariot from the bamboo. It had seven sections, was tall and strong, and was crowned with a small dome. Costly cloths and flags of seven colors adorned it, delighting all who beheld it.

Samartha began the work one day, and by the third day the chariot was complete. It was clearly not the work of ordinary human skill, and everyone stood amazed.

The king requested permission to accompany his sadguru to the festival. Carrying all necessary materials, the great procession set out. Bands of singers holding banners marched in groups, musicians played loudly at the front, and Ramdas rode on an elephant while the king waved the fly-whisk.

As they neared Vadagava, Jayarama Gosavi came forward with many townspeople to welcome them. Seeing Samartha, they fell flat on the ground in reverence, placed flower garlands around his neck, and applied sacred dark marks upon his forehead.

With great honor and joy, Samartha and his followers were led to their lodgings. Cries of "Victory, Victory" filled the air. Ramdas bathed and then went to worship the Lord. Seeing the temple, he was deeply pleased.

Delicious offerings were prepared, and Brahmans were fed daily. Hari-kirtanas were held every night, filling all hearts with devotion. Rangoba Gosavi of Hajhare and the great Vishnu Ramanswami performed inspired kirtanas daily, along with many other noble Vaishnavas.

Ramdas listened to all kirtanas with equal reverence, whether offered by the learned or the simple. His vision was impartial, and he had completely cast aside pride, fault-finding, and attachment.

Ramdas was completely free from pride. Jayarama Gosavi's capable disciples worked tirelessly day and night, and the festival became a glorious display of bhakti, lacking nothing in its observance.

On the eighth day, the sacred appearance day of Lord Krishna, Ramdas himself led the kirtana. He sang an abhanga filled with the nine emotions, narrating the divine life of Krishna. The words of saints are immeasurable in their power, yet a few were spoken to awaken devotion in the hearts of the listeners.

The assembly was overwhelmed by Samartha's kirtana. Each heart felt transformed into Krishna Himself, and the illusions of worldly life vanished. Ramdas alternated between verse and prose, using shloka meters and structured divisions, narrating Krishna's life briefly but pouring forth boundless love.

On the eighth and ninth days Ramdas continued his kirtanas. Then came the joyful tenth day, the celebration of Gopalakala. A vast crowd gathered from distant places. Groups carrying banners marched forward, shouting the name of God and cries of "Victory, Victory."

Jayarama Gosavi began the Gopalakala, dramatizing the divine pastimes of Lord Krishna. Saints sat watching, their joy beyond measure. Krishna's childhood sports were enacted with expressive gestures, stirring deep love in every heart. The games of handma, humbhari, and lapandavi were shown. The cowherds dragged Krishna playfully by His feet. Yashoda's churning of butter and her motherly emotions were vividly portrayed.

Krishna's stealing of milk and the complaints brought to Yashoda were enacted with devotion. His standing upon the shoulders of the cowherds, piercing the milk pots, and letting streams of milk flow were shown, delighting the audience. The games with the cowherd maidens, including plimgadi and pinga dances, were performed, and even the saints joined in the dance.

During the Gopalakala, sacred offerings were distributed to all. The saints rejoiced endlessly. Witnessing this divine joy, Ramdas recited a shloka overflowing with love.

After the Gopalakala, Ramdas ordered the bamboo chariot to be brought. On seeing it, the people were astonished. Its brilliance dazzled the eyes, and when sunlight fell upon its pinnacle, it shone radiantly. Bells atop the canopy rang sweetly as it moved.

People exclaimed that they had never seen such a sight. Though made of bamboo, the chariot was unbreakable, tall with seven divisions, and capable of carrying many people. After worship, the deity was placed inside the chariot. The Lord's padukas were carried in front, fly-whisks were waved, and the crowd pulled the chariot with thunderous cries of "Victory, Victory."

Haridasas sang with devotion to the sound of cymbals, veenas, and drums. Fragrant powders filled the air, drums thundered, and joy knew no bounds. People experienced the fruit of holy association, feeling peace and fulfillment beyond worldly life.

The crowd was so dense that many climbed rooftops to witness the procession. The chariot was brought to the temple of Maruti, where Ramdas worshipped Him according to tradition. Then all returned to the temple of Hari, where Ramdas stood before Lord Krishna.

Fresh garlands adorned the Lord, incense was offered, lamps were waved, and clouds of fragrant powders rose. Vaishnavas danced before the temple gates, shouting God's holy names, unable to contain their joy. At night, another dramatic performance was held, after which Krishna's image was placed upon a bed, and sacred offerings were distributed.

At dawn, the visiting saints were honored, and the crowd dispersed reluctantly, unable to bear separation from the Lord.

Unnoticed by anyone, Samartha departed. The king and Ramdas' followers followed him. Upon reaching the Valley of Chaphala, they found Samartha seated in the temple of Lord Rama, absorbed in worship. All, including the king, bowed before him.

After Samartha returned quietly to Chaphala, and later his followers arrived with the king. They found him seated before Rama, speaking tenderly in prayer. After receiving his leave, the king returned to his capital. Ramdas then ascended the mountain with his disciples. He followed strict discipline, begging food from only one village. Akabai prepared the meal, which Samartha accepted. Though many visitors came, he allowed none to stay. Only five disciples remained with him on the mountain.

One day Samartha said to Akabai, "I have a strong longing for sweet custard. Prepare some at once."

Akabai immediately placed a large quantity of milk on the fire. She added rice to it and slowly boiled it down until it thickened. When it became rich and fragrant, she prepared a delicious custard. She served it to Samartha on a leaf-plate, adding melted butter and sugar.

Samartha ate it with his fingers. His belching showed his satisfaction. Yet even then he asked for more. Akabai brought another serving and placed it before him. Though the taste had already begun to turn unpleasant, Samartha forced himself to eat it. The food rose back into his mouth, yet he swallowed it by effort.

Those watching were astonished. They exclaimed, "Samartha, what is this you are doing?"

Akabai asked in concern, "What does all this mean?"

Samartha replied calmly, "I still feel a longing for that custard. Bring me more."

She brought another serving. Samartha swallowed a few mouthfuls with great effort, and then suddenly vomited profusely. By this act, his craving for sweet custard was completely destroyed.

Turning inward, he addressed his stomach and said, "You asked for sweet things. Why do you now suffer because of them? It is through you that this body remains alive, yet wrong indulgence damages the bodily organs."

He added, “If you still feel desire, come again and ask for more.”

Akabai then came and covered the vomit with ashes. Samartha composed an abhanga in which he sternly rebuked his own heart, intending it as guidance for seekers of final liberation.

After reciting the abhanga, Samartha washed his mouth, bathed, and completed his purification rituals. Kalyana Gosavi stood nearby with folded hands. Akabai exclaimed, “What a strange and unpleasant act this was!”

Samartha replied, “There are five objects of attachment: sound, touch, taste, sight, and smell. People consider enjoyment of these senses as happiness, but in the end they lead only to sorrow. Men indulge in sensual pleasures until they are exhausted, and finally they suffer the torments of hell.”

He continued, “The deer loves sound more than life itself, and listening to it, is slain by the hunter. The elephant is trapped by attachment to touch. The moth is drawn by brightness and burns itself in fire. The fish delights in taste and swallows the bait, only to be dragged to death. The bumblebee is intoxicated by fragrance and gets trapped within the lotus when it closes. Each being has its own fatal craving, and all meet the same end. The human body, bound by the five senses, has no good destiny unless restraint is practiced. Among all senses, taste is the most dangerous, for it strengthens the others. Therefore, the wise conquer the sense of taste first. Those who have not destroyed this craving still long for sweet things. Such people become renunciants in vain. Even gurus have fallen due to this weakness. At the time of death the senses fail, yet the craving for taste remains. Thus rebirth becomes inevitable. For this reason, I ate to excess and vomited. Now I cannot even bear the sight of sweet custard. My stomach rebels at the thought of it.”

Hearing these words, the disciples bowed before Samartha. From that day onward, they conquered their craving for taste and gave up foods prepared for pleasure. They ate whatever came to them only to satisfy hunger.

For one seeking final liberation without obstruction, the simplest path is the destruction of longing itself.

In this manner Samartha Ramdas continued to instruct seekers of final liberation through his own example. When the month of Chaitra arrived, saints and devotees gathered in great numbers to celebrate the birth of Lord Rama. Musicians played joyfully at the pavilion of Shri Rama, while drums and instruments filled the air. A vast crowd assembled, chanting the names of God with cries of “Victory, Victory.”

For nine days kirtanas were performed with devotion. Kalyana Gosavi was entrusted with arranging the final dramatic performances. Many great saints and noble Vaishnavas attended, including Rangoba of Najhare, Jayarama Swami, Vamana Swami, regarded as an incarnation of Vyasa in this age, and Tukaram, the supreme devotee in the line of Namdeva. Their hearts were free from expectation, for saints remain content in all circumstances.

Large numbers of Brahmans were fed daily, and enthusiastic kirtanas continued without pause. However, the food served consisted mainly of greasy items, which did not suit the season. Many Brahmans suffered discomfort and complained that such food weakened their voices and affected their health.

During these discussions Samartha remained unseen, seated silently in a banyan tree near the deity of Maruti, listening attentively. Hearing the concerns, he reflected deeply. Later, he returned and sang an abhanga filled with wisdom, which pleased the saints and sadhus. After midnight the kirtanas concluded, lamps were waved before Lord Sri Rama, devotees danced in joy, and sweets were distributed.

At dawn Samartha summoned the organizers and spoke firmly. He said that Sri Rama was not pleased with the food being served. Rama had taken birth to please the Brahmans, and therefore their needs must be honored. He instructed that rice, dal, vegetables, and puranpoli be prepared henceforth, as such food would satisfy both the Brahmans and the Lord.

The servants accepted his command, and from that day onward this tradition was followed during the Rama Navami celebrations at Chaphala. Thus the birthday of Lord Rama was celebrated with harmony and devotion. The saints were honored, gifts were distributed to the Brahmans, and afterward the king returned to his palace.

Once there was a disciple of Samartha Ramdas who by birth was a barber and lived in the valley of the Krishna river. He served his sadguru with unwavering devotion and complete surrender. Pleased with his selfless service, God granted him a direct divine vision. Renouncing his worldly occupation, he received formal initiation and donned the saffron robe. He studied the Dasbodh diligently, lived on alms, and attained the highest spiritual knowledge.

Endowed with wisdom, detachment from worldly desires, and deep devotion, he became widely known as Krishna Gosavi. One day, a Brahman approached him with sincere humility and devotion. Placing his head at Krishna Gosavi's feet, he said, "Please initiate me as your disciple."

Krishna Gosavi was startled. He replied, "I am a barber by birth. This is not proper. Among all castes, the Brahman is the highest and the natural guru of the eighteen castes. Go to Samartha Ramdas and receive initiation from him."

Krishna Gosavi reasoned with him in many ways, but the Brahman would not listen. With folded hands, he said, "My heart is fixed on you alone. I desire no other guru. I have come to you as a suppliant, with my body, speech, and mind completely surrendered." This Brahman was Jayaram Pant, and he continued to plead with unwavering determination.

Finally, both of them went to Samartha Ramdas. Krishna Gosavi bowed at Samartha's feet and said, "This Brahman troubles me without reason. He insists that I initiate him as my disciple."

Samartha turned to Jayaram Pant and said, "You should receive instruction from a Brahmana. Your request goes against common custom and scriptural tradition." Saying this, Samartha recited a sacred verse, teaching the subtle truth to seekers of liberation—so that they might discern what is truly right and wrong.

Yet, despite the profound instruction, the Brahmana remained unmoved. Falling repeatedly at Samartha's feet, he pleaded, "Please command him to initiate me through the sacred mantra."

Seeing the firmness of his resolve, Samartha finally said to Krishna Gosavi, "Give him the initiatory mantra. Let no doubt of propriety remain in your mind."

With Samartha's command, the two returned at once to the math in the Krishna valley. After duly worshipping Lord Rama, Krishna Gosavi initiated the Brahman into the path of devotion to Lord Rama. Whispering the sacred mantra into his ear, he said, "Accept my instructions as your authority. Now go and worship Samartha. Wash his feet and drink the sacred water."

The Brahmana donned the saffron robes, underwent the initiatory rites, and from that time onward became known everywhere as Jayarama Gosavi. He regularly visited Samartha and reverently drank the charanamrita of his feet. As long as Samartha lived, Jayarama served him faithfully with body, mind, and soul.

When Krishna Gosavi suddenly departed to his heavenly abode at the end of his life, Jayarama was by his side. Overcome with devotion, he resolved that a samadhi should be erected in his sadguru's honor. On the very spot where Krishna Gosavi was cremated, he built an altar and installed the sacred footprints, worshipping them daily with deep sincerity.

Desiring to hold a sacred festival in his guru's honor, Jayarama begged for food, collected grain, and gathered all necessary items. He then approached Samartha and said, "May your greatness grant permission to conduct a sacred festival in his honor."

Samartha replied, “If the Brahmanas hear of this, they may raise unnecessary objections. You are noble in conduct and a Brahmana by feeling and character. Invite the Brahmans to a feast, and Rama will remove all obstacles.”

Greatly pleased, Jayarama returned to his math and immediately prepared for the feast. He invited all the Brahmanas of the town and any travelers who happened to arrive. After bathing, he seated himself to receive his guests.

The Brahmanas arrived after their ritual baths, worshipped the samadhi, and recited Vedic mantras. But soon, some ill-minded people began to criticize. They said, “This Jayarama Gosavi follows Ramdas. While his sadguru is still living, he has started a memorial festival here.”

Others replied, “Krishna Gosavi was a barber by birth but possessed true knowledge. Jayarama was his devoted disciple and served him faithfully.”

When certain Brahmanas of high rank heard this, they objected strongly. “This is against scripture,” they said. “We should not take food here.” Saying this, they rose and prepared to leave.

Jayarama was deeply distressed. At that very moment, he remembered the feet of Ramdas with full faith. The compassionate sadguru, knowing all through his divine insight, suddenly appeared among them.

The Brahmanas said to Ramdas, “There is a sacred festival here in memory of a barber. We therefore doubt whether it is proper for us to eat here. When the sun itself is present, why seek light from a painted image on a wall? While you are alive and visible, why did Jayarama take instruction from a barber? If you perform some miracle, we shall be willing to dine here.”

Hearing this, Samartha performed a wondrous act. He called Jayarama forward. Instantly, the Brahmanas beheld a divine vision: Maruti seated upon Ramdas’s shoulder, and Lord Rama standing behind Jayarama. They saw this clearly with their own eyes, and all their doubts vanished.

They exclaimed, “Here, everything is Rama. Where then is the distinction between religious and irreligious?” With their doubts removed, the Brahmanas joyfully took their seats and partook of the feast.

Punasupari (Betel-nuts) and gifts were distributed to all, and the Brahmans were fully satisfied. Thus, by divine grace, harmony was restored.

After the feast, the Brahmans departed, and Jayarama was greatly comforted. Falling at Samartha’s feet, he exclaimed, “You have protected your helpless servant.” Ramdas replied gently, “Rama Himself carries the same feeling in His heart. He is always the protector of the lowly.” Saying this, Ramdas recited a sacred abhanga. Such was the nature of Ramdas. He possessed deep devotion toward Lord Rama. His heart was always filled with love for Rama.

Ramdas wandered alone into the forest. Holding Shri Rama firmly in his mind, he absorbed himself in divine joy upon a mountain peak. In his waking state, in sleep, in dreams, and even in dreamless rest, all was Rama alone. He had no other desire except to sing of the glories of Lord Rama, contemplate Him inwardly and outwardly, and remain constantly absorbed in His remembrance.

For the salvation of the world, Ramdas moved as a partial manifestation of Maruti, free from bodily awareness and wandering like one intoxicated with divine love. Later, his disciples arrived with Akabai. She gathered forest flowers, fruits, and roots, and placed them before the Swami, who accepted them gladly. True to his spirit of indifference, Ramdas ate whatever was available. Sometimes he ate carefully prepared food, at other times forest produce. If no bedding was available, he slept upon bare rock. Praise from the virtuous and criticism from the wicked left him equally untouched.

On one occasion, Ramdas suddenly ran toward a stream of pure water, leapt in with his clothes on, bathed, and then sat apart in silence. Akabai, astonished, asked him gently why he had bathed when she had washed his clothes the previous day.

Ramdas replied calmly, "My elder brother, known as Rami Ramdas, has left his body and entered the abode of Lord Rama. In accordance with scriptural duty, I have bathed in the waters of the Krishna and must observe the period of ritual observance."

When asked about the date, it was found to be the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight of Phalguna, a Sunday. Akabai humbly asked who had brought the news from his distant home. Ramdas simply replied, "I know it to be true."

At that moment, King Shivaji arrived with Prince Sambhaji and his ministers. Seeing the Swami seated apart, the king inquired of Akabai, who explained Ramdas's declaration. Wondering how news could have arrived so swiftly from the distant Godavari region, the king quietly sent two messengers to verify the matter.

Soon, confirmation arrived. Ramchandra, the son of Rami Ramdas, wrote to the king affirming the truth of the passing. The astonished king then asked Ramdas how he had known of his brother's death. In response, Samartha recited a profound abhanga, offered as living proof of his divine insight.

Having spoken thus on that occasion, Samartha issued a command to all his disciples. He said, "The festival of Rama, Rama Navami, is near. All of you must go to the Valley of Chaphala. The Vaishnava bhaktas appointed for annual service will assemble there. Begin the festival on the first day of the fortnight, following established custom. I am unable to come immediately, but I shall arrive on the ninth day. Expect me then."

Obeying his command, all the disciples departed except Dattu Divatya, Jayarama Gosavi, and Akabai, who remained to serve him. At Chaphala, a great gathering of saints soon assembled. During the day, Brahmanas were fed, and at night, kirtanas filled the air. Thrice daily, Rama was worshipped with sweet music, while the bhaktas chanted Rama's holy name with cries of "Victory, Victory."

On the ninth day of the fortnight, the ceremonial processions began. Around noon, Samartha suddenly arrived, filling everyone with joy. Men and women who had come from distant places rushed to see and worship him. Such was the crowd at the temple entrance that there was hardly space to offer prostrate salutations.

At that time, Samartha recited an abhanga on the purification of the body, whose deeper meaning must be understood by the seeker. After this, he worshipped the deity of Maruti, then bowed fully before Rama, and finally returned to his mountain dwelling.

On the tenth day, dramatic performances were held, and the king distributed gifts. Those who had assisted in the festival were specially honoured, along with saints, mahantas, Haridasas, the poor, the helpless, and beggars. Thereafter, the king ascended the mountain with his retinue to worship Samartha.

Vedic scholars, Brahmanas, saints, sadhus, Vaishnavas, Kalyana Gosavi, and many disciples followed. All bowed in reverence before Ramdas. A vast crowd gathered around his hut, including distinguished citizens, loudly proclaiming victory. The king worshipped his guru with garments and ornaments, and similarly honoured the saints.

When the saints sought leave to depart, Ramdas recited another meaningful abhanga. Having received his blessing, the mahantas and pilgrims returned to their homes, carrying the image of their beloved Swami deeply imprinted in their hearts.

After the festival concluded, King Shivaji made a humble request to Ramdas. Bowing fully, he said, "I hold a deep desire that you should come to the hill of Parali. I intend to feed a hundred thousand people there."

Ramdas replied, “I am content in the forest. Why do you wish to take me to the hill? Tell me the true reason.” The king answered, “I have built a temple to Lord Rama there. I desire that all the saints should gather at that sacred place.”

Understanding the king’s intention, Ramdas agreed and recited an abhanga in harmony with the king’s wish. Preparations for the journey began at once. Musical instruments sounded, kettle-drums were beaten, and the army assembled. A noble elephant was brought forth, and Samartha was seated upon it beneath a canopy. The king stood behind him, waving the fly-whisk, while the bhaktas joyfully chanted Rama’s holy name.

Disciples and followers formed a grand procession, some walking ahead, others travelling in carriages due to weakness. Chariots and carts carried many devotees. That day, the party travelled twenty-eight miles from Chaphala and reached the village of Parali, at the foot of the fort.

They encamped peacefully on the banks of the Urvashi river. All bathed and performed their daily devotions. Samartha also bathed, after which the king provided all the articles needed for worship. Kalyana Gosavi began the ceremonial worship.

Ramdas was clothed in yellow robes, adorned with a fine turban, sacred tilak marks on his forehead, and a garland around his neck. Incense, lamps, and costly offerings were placed before him. Kalyana sang hymns of praise, and all present bowed low. The king stood throughout with folded hands, and afterward offered his full prostration. When the worship concluded, food was served. Brahmans, having bathed, dined in orderly rows along with Samartha and the disciples. The Swami was then honoured with a garment woven of gold and silver thread, a richly bordered shawl, and a pearl ornament placed upon his head by the king.

Samartha seated himself in the palanquin. King Shivaji walked ahead barefoot, carrying his shoes in his hands. In this manner they ascended the mountain, followed by a vast multitude. At last they reached the assembly hall, where Samartha was respectfully seated upon the throne.

The entire gathering took their places, but the king alone remained standing, his palms joined in reverence. Sugar candy was distributed to all, and gifts were offered to the Brahmans. When night fell, the army was sent away, and the king remained behind, standing close to his Swami, eager to serve him.

Samartha then continued his regular discipline of prayer and worship. With deep love, he poured out his supplications to Rama. In many forms of song, he praised the Lord of Ayodhya, and at the close of worship, he performed arati to the deity of Lord Rama, the beloved of Sita, and prepared Him for rest.

A bed had been arranged for Samartha, and he lay down upon it. The king sat beside him, gently massaging his feet with his own hands. Seeing that he was now alone with the king, Samartha gave him a command.

“Invite all the saints who dwell in the Krishna valley to a feast for the Brahmans. Also invite Tukarama Gosavi of Dehu, the noble Vaishnava, filled with love for God, who has appeared as an incarnation of Namadeva to uplift the humble-hearted. Bring him here.”

Hearing this, the king replied with humility. “I can send invitations to all the saints of the Krishna valley, but Tukarama is completely indifferent to worldly matters. His mind never turns toward material things. The Brahmana Rameshvara of Vagholi, a learned pandit versed in the six shastras, once caused Tukarama’s manuscript of abhangas to be thrown into the river out of jealousy. For thirteen days Tukarama lay fasting at the temple until his prayer was answered. Then Krishna, the Lord of Rukmini, brought the manuscript back from the water, perfectly dry. Hearing of his greatness, I sent messengers to invite him, but he would not come. I then sent my secretary, and later I myself went to see him at Lonagava. I offered him small gifts, but he firmly refused to accept anything.”

Samartha replied, “Listen, O King. What need has a saint for money? Those who are caught in the net of desire lose their closeness to the Lord of Pandhari. It was only because I perceived the deep longing of your heart that I came to this fort. If Tukarama understands this, he will surely come without delay.”

Hearing these words from his Sadguru, the king felt great joy. He immediately sent a palanquin and his secretary on horseback to deliver the invitation to Tukarama. Invitations were also sent to other saints and leading yogis, such as Nimbaraja of Daithana, Mauniraja skilled in yogic disciplines, Anantasiddha of unworldly mind, Vamanaswami, and Jayarama.

The king further invited distinguished Vedic Brahmans and learned pandits renowned for their mastery of the shastras. All of them arrived at Parali. As the saints and mahantas came, the king personally went forward to receive them, prostrated himself before them with sincerity, and then led them respectfully into the presence of Samartha.

The messenger sent to Dehu informed Tukarama that Samartha Ramdas had arrived at Parali. The moment Tukarama heard this, his heart overflowed with joy, and he immediately set out to meet him. With him were fourteen noble Vaishnavas who had renounced worldly occupations and lived constantly in his company.

The God-loving bhakta departed without taking formal leave of anyone. When his followers searched for him and discovered his path, they joyfully joined him. Carrying cymbals, veenas, and drums, they walked together singing kirtanas filled with love and devotion. Among them were Rameshvara Shastri, Dhondabhata the Purana reader, Gangaji Mavala of Kadus, Kanha the brother of Tukarama, and Santaji Jaganadya of Chakan, along with many other Vaishnava devotees whose names were countless.

Though a palanquin was offered, Tukarama chose to walk on foot, refusing all signs of honor. When King Shivaji learned of his arrival, he went forward eagerly to receive him. With deep humility, the king prostrated himself fully before Tukarama, placed a garland around his neck, and marked his forehead with sacred powder.

As Tukarama reached the hill, he met Samartha Ramdas. Seeing one another from a distance, both were filled with delight. Tukarama immediately fell prostrate before Samartha, who hastened to lift him up and embrace him warmly. All who witnessed this meeting felt profound joy.

The assembly then gathered, consisting of saints, mahantas, learned Brahmans, and Vedic scholars, with Samartha seated in the chief place. Ramdas spoke in many ways on the path of knowledge, clarifying truth and dispelling error. Those eager for deeper understanding asked questions, to which Samartha replied in inspired verses, filling all hearts with peace and spiritual absorption.

The Brahmans were seated in orderly rows, and the king's secretary worshipped them with fragrant ointments, rice, and flowers. Carefully prepared food was served on leaf plates, while the king personally supervised the arrangements from a distance, ensuring that no one lacked anything. All were fully satisfied and honored with betel leaves, gifts, and money. In feeding the Brahmanas, the king rejoiced, knowing it pleased Rama. Samartha later dined in the company of the saints.

When evening fell, lamps were lit everywhere, and the royal pavilion shone brilliantly with torches, crystal lamps, and candles. Carpets, mattresses, and cushions were spread for comfort. Saints, sadhus, Brahmanas, scholars, and devotees gathered together for kirtana.

Samartha then said to the king, "Now that noble souls are seated to listen, perform a kirtana without hesitation. Kirtana is the highest service to God. In this age of Kali, loving praise of Hari is the supreme path to liberation. Therefore sing and dance with devotion, accompanied by music."

Receiving this command from his Sadguru, the king's heart overflowed with joy. After offering reverence to Samartha and bowing inwardly to all the saints, he brought Rama into his mind and began the kirtana. He sang abhangas taught by Ramdas himself, which he had long cherished and practiced in private. The instruments resounded, bells were tied to his feet, and as the king rose to sing, all present watched in astonishment and reverence.

Such was the abhanga that the king sang, along with padas and shlokas of many kinds. With bells joyfully fastened to his feet, he danced as he performed the kirtana in praise of God. Casting aside all shame and concern for public opinion, he surrendered himself fully to actions inspired by pure devotion. The saints and mahantas watched him with delight, and to them it appeared a wondrous sight.

In former ages, great Vaishnava bhaktas had ruled as kings, and in this age of Kali it was truly the noble Vaishnava Shivaji who had become king. The saints and mahantas listened to his kirtana with deep joy in their hearts. Further, the saints discussed and sang abhangas composed by many revered saints. Soon, they themselves began singing the sacred abhangas. Then, with great joy, Sant Bahinabai began to sing an abhanga. Hearing her, everyone gathered in the assembly was filled with happiness and deep delight.

Only Gaga Pandita muttered inwardly to himself, thinking, "Our king has gone mad. He has set aside the words of Vyasa and sings in the language of Maharashtra, Marathi." Yet he did not speak this aloud. Reflecting on the wealth, garments, and comforts the king provided for his household, he kept silent, voicing no open opposition.

Still, within his mind he thought, "One should not listen to devotional singing (Abhangas) performed by women." Bahinabai, perceiving the state of his heart through inner insight, replied to this unspoken thought in a verse. When her part concluded, the assembly burst forth with loud cries of Rama's holy names, clapping their hands in joy. The air itself seemed filled with transcendental sound, and all hearts overflowed with devotion.

Then, at the command of Samartha, Vamana Pandita arose to perform a kirtana. In this age of Kali, he had appeared as an incarnation of Vyasa himself. His poetry was unmatched in sweetness and depth. As he sang, his verses reflected the teachings of the Bhagavata, in which the essence of the Vedas is revealed.

Hearing him, the saints were filled with delight. Cries of "Victory, Victory" resounded throughout the assembly. At the close, hymns of praise were sung, and Krishna was worshipped with the arati. Thus the gathering concluded in an atmosphere of divine joy and fulfillment.

At the close of the night, Vamana Svami arose and waved the sacred offering before the deity of Lord Rama. Only one watch of the night remained. Some lay down to rest, yet whether awake, dreaming, or in deep sleep, Rama alone filled their thoughts.

When the sun rose, the saints began their morning devotions, repeating the holy names of Lord Rama. After bathing and worship, they dined together with the Brahmanas. While the sun was still shining, the kirtanas began again. The saints took their seats, and the king sat facing them with reverence.

Nimbaraja Bava of Daithana then stood up to perform kirtana, filling the hearts of all with joy. He was a noble Vaishnava, a giver of blessings, and a devoted follower of Ekanath. His kirtanas were said to delight even Lord Vishnu resting upon the serpent Shesha. Having committed all of Ekanath's poetry to memory, he sang an abhanga with deep love. As he sang, emotion overwhelmed him. Tears flowed from his eyes, stirring the hearts of all who listened. He vividly described the life of Krishna, holding the entire assembly, men and women alike, in rapt attention. At sunset, hymns were offered to Panduranga, and Samartha bestowed special honor upon Nimbaraja for his kirtana.

After the evening worship, Rangasvami arose to sing. His devotion was intense and his poetic skill remarkable. He was known for awakening all the emotions of the heart and was greatly revered by the saints. He had composed a commentary on the Bhagavad Gita called the Ranganathi, and his samadhi remains honored even today. His verses taught devotion, true knowledge, and detachment from worldly life.

Then Jayarama Gosavi stood up to perform kirtana. At once the air thundered with cries of Vitthala, hands clapped in rhythm, and waves of sound filled the space. Jayarama Krishnadasa, famed throughout the land, sang with such sweetness that the ears were never satisfied. Bodily awareness faded, sleep vanished, and every mind remained absorbed in devotion. It was said that even Yama, the Lord of Death, trembled at the power of the holy names.

In this age of Kali, God had manifested through saints, who proclaimed the saving power of His name and delivered the world. Hearing Jayarama's kirtana, all hearts overflowed with joy. Thereafter, many other devotees performed worship with love, including Kalyana, Annappa Gosavi, Jayarama, and Shivarama, all disciples in the lineage of Samartha.

Samartha then turned to Tukarama and said with love, “Arise and perform a kirtana. I have long desired to hear you, and so have all present.” Hearing this, the king was filled with joy. Tukarama bowed reverently to Samartha and stood up to sing, assisted by four noble Vaishnavas who had renounced worldly life and chosen the company of saints.

It is said that Tukarama was the perfect continuation of Namadeva, who had vowed to compose a billion abhangas. Since that vow remained incomplete, Namadeva returned in the form of Tukarama to fulfill it and to save the world. For this reason, Tukarama spoke only through abhangas, whether on worldly matters or divine truths.

As Tukarama began his kirtana, the air overflowed with cries of Vitthala. His abhangas poured forth like a river of devotion, filling every heart with joy. The saints listened in rapture, though one scholar, Gaga Pandita, questioned the praise of Hari spoken by a Vaishnava outside the Vedic tradition. Vamana Svami silenced him by quoting scripture, and Tukarama, hearing of the dispute, sang further abhangas that revealed the highest truth through love.

As the kirtana continued, all awareness of the body vanished. The king saw everything as Hari alone. Tukarama himself forgot his bodily existence. Out of compassion for the world, Krishna restored Tukarama to bodily awareness and spoke to him, reminding him that the night had passed and the arati offering should be performed. Tukarama then performed arati to Lord Panduranga, and divine joy overflowed. Seeing his love, everyone began to dance. The king, ministers, saints, Brahmans, scholars, women, children, and even servants joined in, swept away by devotion. It was as if all the three worlds were dancing together.

Through the four watches of the night, the kirtana continued. At dawn, Tukarama bowed to the saints. Samartha rushed forward and embraced him tightly. Their love was beyond description. Though known by different names, they were one in heart. Cries of “Victory, Victory” filled the air, sweets were distributed, and the assembly dispersed in bliss. After bathing and worship, the Brahmanas were fed, and at night the saints again gathered for recitation and devotion.

At last Ramdas himself rose to perform a kirtana, filling everyone with joy. A great crowd gathered to listen. Many devotees stood behind him with instruments, leading the chorus with love, while the king stood humbly behind Ramdas and all the saints sat facing him. Truly, Ramdas was seen as the living manifestation of Maruti, overflowing with devotion.

His kirtana was filled with the joy of divine love. He sang many abhangas, revealing deep spiritual truths. Those who listened with faith were absorbed in their meaning, while others could not grasp their depth. Ramdas then openly declared his great desire to listen continually to the kirtanas of Tukarama, a wish that delighted all present.

For an entire month, Brahmanas were feasted during the day and Hari kirtanas were performed at night. Joy filled every heart. The king’s secretary later reported that one hundred and twenty five thousand Brahmans had been fed. Final gifts were then distributed, and the saints were duly honored. The noble Vaishnavas were seated on the throne, their feet washed by the king, garlands placed around their necks, sacred marks applied to their foreheads, and garments given to all.

Ramdas then spoke words of lasting significance. He declared that since so many saints had gathered there, the fort was especially blessed and should henceforth be known as Sajjanagada, the Fort of Saints. The king immediately ordered the name to be officially changed.

As the gathering dispersed, saints and pilgrims returned to their homes. The king felt sorrow at their departure, his heart filled with love. He had brought golden coins intending to honor Tukarama, but on hearing of this, Tukarama quietly departed without informing anyone. The king later told Ramdas that he had wished to grant Tukarama the revenues of several towns.

Hearing this, Ramdas laughed warmly and said that to saints even dominion over the three worlds is of no value. Tukarama had renounced all powers and accomplishments, worshipping Panduranga without any personal desire, not even seeking liberation. Realizing this, the king rejoiced, understanding that Tukarama had appeared solely to save the world.

The king's heart overflowed with devotion. He regarded Ramdas as Maruti Himself, believing that all sacred waters dwelt at his feet. In his mind there remained no room for doubt or opposition, only reverence and love.

One day King Shivaji earnestly pleaded with Ramdas, urging him to make Sajjanagada his permanent residence and not wander elsewhere. Samartha gently replied that a saint should never remain bound to one place. Attachment, he explained, limits freedom and leads to bondage. The true path of a saint is to wander from sacred place to sacred place, remaining nowhere long enough to create longing or dependence.

Hearing this, the king understood the inner resolve of his sadguru. He bowed deeply and never again pressed his request. Even so, Ramdas stayed at Sajjanagada for some time, yet whenever he felt drawn to solitude, he would retreat into the forest and later return of his own will. Rama was ever in his mind and heart. Among people or in the forest, Ramdas saw only Rama. He sang of Rama, contemplated Rama, and through love, Rama became inseparably bound to Ramdas. In all beings, animate and inanimate, among gods, demigods, and men, he perceived only the form of Lord Rama.

One day Ramdas felt the desire to worship Shiva, who is the servant and devotee of Lord Rama, and set out for Mount Yavateshvara. He rejoiced at the wondrous form of the mountain and worshipped Shiva in the temple there, praising him with devotion. Having completed the rites and offered his praise, Ramdas took leave and returned to Sajjanagada, where he stayed for several days.

Another extraordinary event then occurred. At Pratapagada, King Shivaji had installed the deity of Goddess Bhavani, whose true form even the gods cannot fully comprehend. One night she appeared before Ramdas in radiant brilliance. Ramdas bowed before her and asked who she was. She replied that she was the primal Maya and questioned why he had not praised her in his verses.

Ramdas humbly replied that she herself was the primal power through which all praise is possible, and that whatever could be spoken of the Supreme Lord Rama was only by her grace. Pleased with his words, the goddess said she delighted in hearing her attributes described. Ramdas then asked her, playfully, to remove four pearls from her necklace and make them into earrings for him, promising to praise her thereafter.

The goddess agreed and vanished. She appeared at Pratapagada in the form of a goldsmith and fashioned the earrings. Ramdas, perceiving this through divine insight, appeared within the locked temple. When the goddess questioned how he entered, he replied that he had come in the same way she had. Astonished, she placed the pearl earrings in his ears, received his praise, and Ramdas returned silently to Sajjanagada.

At dawn, the priests at Pratapagada discovered that four pearls were missing from the goddess's ornaments. A great commotion arose, arrests of priests were made, and the matter reached the king. That night, Goddess Bhavani appeared to King Shivaji in a dream and revealed that she herself had given the pearls to Ramdas.

The king hurried to Sajjanagada and saw the pearl earrings in Ramdas' ears. Filled with awe, he bowed before his guru. When questioned, Ramdas calmly narrated the entire event. To the king's doubts about the locked temple, Samartha replied that one who sees all as Rama is never bound, and one who has Rama's grace can appear where he wills.

Hearing these words, the disciples marvelled. King Shivaji fell at Ramdas' feet with deep reverence, confessing that the power of such a saint is beyond comprehension.

Once, while Samartha was seated quietly on his simple mattress, an extraordinary event took place at Sajjanagada. Among Samartha's disciples was a wealthy and respected merchant. He had traveled by sea on a trading vessel and was returning with a large and valuable cargo. By fate's decree, a terrible calamity struck. The ship began to sink, and seawater rushed into the vessel. Facing certain death, the merchant made a desperate vow in his heart: "Victory, victory to Ramdas Samartha! Come at once to my rescue. If you save this ship from sinking, I will surely offer you a tenth of its value."

At that very moment, Samartha appeared before him. The danger vanished, the vessel safely reached the shore, and the merchant fell at Ramdas' feet in gratitude. As he bowed and then looked up, Samartha was nowhere to be seen. Overwhelmed with wonder, the merchant exclaimed, "The cloud of mercy has saved me." Remembering his vow, he gathered the promised offering and immediately set out for Sajjanagada.

Meanwhile, at Sajjanagada, Samartha was seated calmly among his disciples. Suddenly they noticed that his sleeveless cloth was dripping wet. Vamanasvami asked him, "You have been sitting here all this time. How has your cloth become wet? Tell us the truth."

Samartha replied, "A vessel was sinking in the sea. A pious passenger made a vow. I went there, saved him, and have just returned. My cloth was soaked with seawater."

Hearing this, everyone was amazed. The king himself wondered how such a journey could have been possible. The devout accepted Samartha's words with faith, while those lacking devotion doubted them.

The next day, the merchant arrived at Sajjanagada. He brought ten thousand silver rupees and placed them before Ramdas with his own hands. He said, "I was about to perish in the sea with all my cargo when you appeared, O svami, and fulfilled my vow. You saved my ship and my life. I bowed at your feet, but when I looked up, you had vanished. As promised, I now offer you a tenth of my wealth. Please accept this humble offering and use it as you wish."

Those present were struck with wonder and exclaimed that no one could fathom the powers of the sadguru.

Ramdas immediately called the Brahmans and distributed the entire sum among them. Seeing this, the merchant was astonished by such detachment and generosity. Samartha then said to him, "Your wealth has been given to those worthy of it. Apart from the holy name of Rama, why should I accept anything that creates bondage and obstacles? Rama alone is my father and mother. I think only of his lotus feet. All other supports are hindrances. In the end of all ages, everything will perish, but the holy name of Rama alone is imperishable." Hearing these words, the merchant fell at Ramdas' feet in deep devotion.

After some time, a Muhammadan army advanced to capture Sajjanagada. Despite repeated efforts, they failed to conquer the fort. Changing tactics, they occupied a nearby hill and began a fierce cannon bombardment. Cannonballs rained upon Sajjanagada, houses were damaged, and the people were gripped with fear.

When Samartha learned of the danger, he meditated deeply on Maruti. Suddenly, a vast army of monkeys appeared on Sajjanagada. They lifted huge rocks and hurled them upon the attacking forces. Many soldiers were slain, and the enemy commander was thrown into confusion. Astonished by this strange resistance, he reported to Aurangzeb that a Hindu holy man residing in the fort had summoned an army of monkeys who were hurling rocks through the air.

Aurangzeb ordered that the saint be brought before him. The general replied that Ramdas was a holy man beyond any authority. Upon hearing this, Aurangzeb commanded that Ramdas should not be harmed in any way. As soon as this order reached the army, the invaders withdrew and fled.

When King Shivaji heard of this miracle, he came with his forces to Sajjanagada to worship Ramdas. Learning of the heroism of the monkey army, the king was filled with joy and said, “Samartha’s deeds are truly beyond understanding.”

Soon afterward, Samartha took King Shivaji aside and told him that his end was near. He advised him to be vigilant and to fix his mind solely on Lord Rama. Shivaji replied that he had already surrendered his body, mind, and wealth to the Lord. Returning to his palace, the king distributed gifts according to the shastras and departed this world on the very day foretold by his Guru. Before his passing, Shivaji had installed his son Sambhaji upon the throne. Absorbing his mind in the form of Lord Rama, the great king attained his final state. Sambhaji performed his father’s funeral rites and then came to Sajjanagada. With tears in his eyes, he bowed before his Guru Ramdas. Ramdas comforted him, saying that even the greatest people must depart, and urged him to set aside grief and worship Lord Rama with love. Sambhaji then returned to his capital.

After some days, Ramdas summoned all his disciples and told them that the time of his return to his divine home, the abode of Lord Rama, had come. He instructed that Gangadhara, the grandson of his elder brother, be called from Jamba and installed as the head of the order. Though some objected because Gangadhara was a householder, Samartha firmly directed Akabai to carry out this instruction.

Messengers were sent throughout the Krishna valley, and disciples gathered around their svami. With deep affection, Samartha gave his final teachings. He instructed them to live by begging, never to perform religious services for payment, and to avoid pride or false renunciation. So long as the body lasts, he said, one should lovingly worship Supreme Lord Rama according to the shastras.

He instructed them to observe the festivals of Rama and Maruti, to welcome Vaishnavas with reverence, to accept only what is freely given, and to conduct kirtanas and readings of the Dasabodha wherever Rama temples exist. Constant worship of Rama, he declared, would destroy the bonds of Maya.

Hearing these final instructions, the disciples prostrated themselves before their guru, their eyes overflowing with tears as they remembered his life among them.

At that time, a disciple from the Karnataka region sent Ramdas a beautiful deity of Shri Rama accompanied by Sita and Lakshmana. The deity was perfectly formed and made in strict accordance with the rules laid down in the shastras. When Ramdas beheld it, his heart overflowed with joy. Yet he said, “Let it remain in its box for now. It will be needed at the proper time.”

Samartha then instructed Kalyana, saying, “I do not wish a tomb to be built for me. When the temple of Rama is completed, the deities should be installed there.” Hearing this, the disciples were deeply troubled. They pleaded, “At least allow your padukas to be installed here, so that the hearts of the devotees may find peace.”

Dattoba Gosavi, with folded hands, repeatedly begged, “Grant us permission to build a tomb for you. This is the heartfelt wish of all.” Ramdas replied gently, “Why do I need a tomb? You would only create an obstacle for me. If a tomb is raised, devotion will turn away from Rama, and worship will be directed to my padukas instead.”

Hearing this, all fell silent. Still, Dattoba continued his humble appeals. At last Ramdas said, “You may build a stone chamber and place my tomb within it. Above it, build a temple of Rama and install these deities there.” At this permission, the disciples bowed with deep devotion, unable to restrain their love.

Ramdas then announced, “In the month of Magha, on the ninth day of the dark fortnight, at noon, I shall return to my divine home, the abode of Lord Rama. Take note of this.” News of this prophecy spread far and wide, and countless devotees came to Sajjanagada to see and worship him.

From the first day of the dark fortnight of Magha, feasts were offered daily to Brahmanas, and at night Hari kirtanas filled the air before assembled saints and devotees. The disciples went from town to town with their begging bags and returned with food, which Ramdas distributed freely until all were fully satisfied.

For eight days the sacred festival continued. Then the appointed day of Ramdas' departure arrived. King Sambhaji, upon hearing the news, came to be present. The disciples bathed and gazed upon the face of their beloved Svami, saying to one another with heavy hearts, "We shall never see him again."

At last Samartha bathed, marked his forehead and body with the twelve sacred tilak, and placed a tulsi garland around his neck. Joy shone on his face. Sitting calmly in the posture of padmasana, he prayed to Lord Rama with deep devotion.

As his mind became absorbed in Lord Rama, the Lord appeared before him in, dark-hued and radiant, and embraced him. With unwavering faith in Rama, Ramdas gently cast off his body and entered the abode of Lord Rama.

At that moment cries of "Victory, Victory to Rama" filled the air. Divine beings arrived in luminous chariots to witness the scene. Gandharvas, Kinnaras, and celestial beings showered flowers unseen, while Indra and Brihaspati praised Ramdas, saying, "For the salvation of the world, Maruti descended as an avatara. Having completed his divine work, he has now entered into the abode of Lord Rama, leaving behind sacred writings for the upliftment of humanity."

The gods returned to their realms, while devotees mourned deeply. Akabai, Venubai, Bahinabai, and many others wept, saying, "Shivaji was blessed to depart before his Svami. We remain unfortunate, separated from his form."

Kirtanas were sung, flowers and fragrant powders were showered, and a great funeral pyre was prepared. With solemn hearts, the disciples performed the final rites.

On the third day, when the ashes were to be collected, the devotees discovered a stone slab among them, bearing clear impressions of sacred feet, inscribed with the name of Rama in thirteen letters. Seeing this miracle, all marveled at the boundless power of the Sadguru. As they mourned in grief, a wondrous event occurred. A voice arose from beneath the slab, saying, "Kalyana, take pen and ink. I shall dictate an abhanga. Write it exactly." Kalyana, Samartha's devoted secretary, wrote the verse without error. The voice declared that though the body was gone, Ramdas now present in his instructions, and that constant contemplation of Lord Rama and the reading of the Dasabodha would lead seekers to final liberation.

Hearing this bodiless voice, peace filled every heart. The stone slab bearing the sacred footprints was installed there itself, becoming an object of worship and a means to dissolve the pain of separation. Scriptural rites were performed, gifts were distributed, Brahmanas were honored with feasts, and kirtanas were sung. From that time onward, it became customary to read the Dasabodha near the samadhi.

Following the departure of Samartha, a letter was sent to Gangadhara Svami at Jamba, and he came to Sajjanagada, encamping by the riverside. News was sent to King Sambhaji at Satara, and he arrived with his army. The king met Gangadhara, made him a respectful namaskara, and it became known at Sajjanagada that the new head of the order had arrived below. The disciples, including Akabai, Venubai, Kalyana, and Annappa Gosavi, descended the mountain to welcome Gangadhara and brought him up to Sajjanagada. There they embraced him, applied fragrant black powder to his forehead, and offered flowers. Gangadhara was invited to sit in a palanquin, accompanied by the music of drums, conches, and other instruments. The king walked in front, attendants waved fly-whisks, and shouts of "Victory, Victory!" echoed all around. Gangadhara first made a namaskara to Ramdas' seat, and the king also worshipped it with the usual ceremonies.

Meanwhile, Kalyana had begun the construction of Samartha's samadhi. A cellar was excavated, and a temple was built above it. In front of the samadhi, a large assembly hall was erected, where the kirtanas resounded, and countless devotees came to worship. Ramdas' store of good deeds shone forth, and the praises of his divine nature and extraordinary qualities were sung by many, his followers becoming ever more numerous.

A vast quantity of materials was collected for the temple, and distinguished Brahmanas and noble Vaishnavas were invited to participate. The temple was completed to its pinnacle, and the deities of Rama, Lakshmana and Sita was consecrated with vedic mantras, garments, ornaments, garlands, sandalwood paste, incense, lamps, and offerings of food and money. A feast was given to the Brahmans.

In the same way, Samartha's samadhi was worshipped with due rites. It was bathed, anointed with sandalwood paste and rice, incense and lights were waved, and devotees circumambulated it with hearts full of devotion. Brahmanas were honored with feasts, panasupari (betel-nuts), and gifts. The installation celebration lasted five days, with daily kirtanas and continuous devotional observances.

Soon after the temple ceremonies, Gangadhara was formally installed as the head of the order. He was gentle and quiet of disposition, maintaining harmony among the disciples and putting aside all differences in administering the Matha. Akabai requested him to preside over the upcoming festival of Rama's birth, Rama Navami, at the Chaphala Valley. Accompanied by his disciples, Gangadhara traveled in a palanquin with music and banners, reaching the Valley to worship Rama and lead the ten-day festival with joy, feasts for Brahmanas, nightly kirtanas, and dramatic presentations honoring saints. Festivals honoring Maruti were also celebrated in eleven villages where his deities had been installed, following the customs established by Samartha.

King Sambhaji then approached Gangadhara with grants of land that had been intended for Ramdas, who had always been indifferent to worldly possessions. Recognizing the growing needs of the order, Gangadhara accepted the grants, ensuring that the worship of Maruti and the maintenance of temples could continue uninterrupted. These grants included revenues from eleven acres of land in each town with a Maruti temple, and they remain in use to this day.

After the festival at Chaphala, the saints returned to Sajjanagada to observe the first anniversary of Ramdas' departure. A large gathering of pilgrims assembled, enthusiastic kirtanas were held, and the sacred services mirrored those held for the birth of Rama, Rama Navami, with all disciples participating joyfully in devotion and remembrance.

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